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21 AMERICAN ISLAND ESCAPES

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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SOUND JOURNEYS

THE MUSIC ISSUE

18 MELODIC ADVENTURES AROUND THE WORLD

+ Spotify playlists to inspire trips to the Sahara & beyond

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EDITOR'S NOTE
BY GEORGE!

A landscape in California's Joshua Tree National Park lends itself to quiet contemplation.

Traveling to Listen

Let music guide your way around the world

Music is sound organized into a harmonious composition. It's the art of the muses, the rhythm of poetry, the scale of inspiration. In classical Greece, music was embodied by the muse Euterpe, the "giver of delight." In ancient times, music was the beat of a drum and the tone of a flute; before that it was the staccato of raindrops, the rush of a river, the song of a bird. Sound is all around us, and yet it can become so layered and discordant that we stop listening. For travelers, the sense of sound is one of our best tools for discovering the world in all its dimensions. This issue is about exploring with ears first—it's about listening to destinations as much as looking at them. We visit musical places such as Morocco and Corsica, where traditional forms are finding contemporary audiences. We break sonic barriers with gong rocks in Tanzania, a whispering gallery in India, echoes at a mosque in Iran, singing seals in Svalbard, and a sea organ in Croatia. We find silence amid the booming sand dunes of California. Some sounds lead inward on meditative journeys; other sounds carry us far afield on expeditions in search of harmonic convergences. If you really want to hear the world, we discovered, you've got to travel in the key of curiosity. Thanks for tuning in! *—George W. Stone, Editor in Chief*

Nat Geo Highlights

GLOBE-TROT WITH GORDON RAMSAY

For National Geographic's new TV series *Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted,* the famed chef embarks on adventures in six destinations around the world to find culinary inspiration in local flavors. See page 38 for his travel tips, and catch the premiere July 21.

"QUEENS OF EGYPT"

Nefertiti, Hatshepsut, and other fierce females star in this multisensory exhibition at the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C., through September 2. Go to *natgeo.org/dc*.

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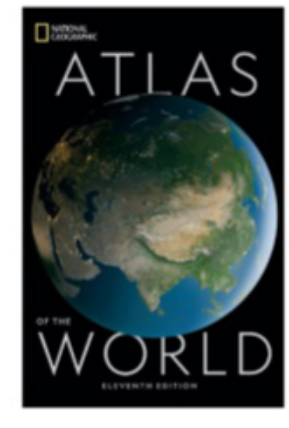

JENNIFER EMERLING (LANDSCAPE), MATTHEW TWOMBLY (ILLUSTRATION)

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THESE ARE SOME OF OUR TOP TRAVEL OBSESSIONS

"At 85, my mother yearned to go on a walking pilgrimage in **Norway.** Joining her, I found lush forests that called to mind the fairyland of stories we'd shared when I was a little girl."
—C.L.

"I traveled to **Mexico** for cooking classes. I ground corn for tamales, seasoned pork *cochinita pibil,* and stuffed empanadas with squash blossoms and *quesillo* cheese. My tastiest trip by far!"
—K.C.

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"As a cyclist, I was drawn to Sa Calobra on Mallorca, **Spain.** Picture a road that starts at the sea and climbs nearly 2,200 feet via 26 hairpin turns in just six miles. Tough but so worth it!"
—E.N.

"I just returned from a trip to see the Canadian Grand Prix in **Montréal.** The energy from the race, matched with the vibrancy of one of my favorite North American cities, made it truly unforgettable."
—J.W.

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HASSAN HAJJAJ; COVER: SPOLUPOZNATSVET

Moroccan musician Abdelkader Bonny strums the lute-like *guembri* (p. 56).

COVER: TRAVELERS EXPLORE SAHARA DESERT DUNES NEAR THE SMALL TOWN OF MERZOUGA, MOROCCO.

COLOMBIA

Land of a Thousand Rhythms

Welcome to Colombia,

where cowboys sing to their cattle, the jungles of the Pacific echo with the sweet sounds of the marimba and dancefloors shake to the beat of cumbia, reggaeton and champeta.

Colombia's musical diversity is so great that is has been called "the country of a thousand rhythms" —1,025, divided between more than 150 different musical genres, to be exact.

Just as the country's world-leading biodiversity is a product of its five exotic regions —the Caribbean, Pacific, Andes, Amazon and Eastern Plains— its musical diversity also stems from a complex geographical blend of cultures and traditions. Cumbia music, for example, mixes both African and Indigenous instruments and musical traditions to form a genre that is uniquely Colombian.

From the wild heart of the Amazon rainforest to the windswept deserts of the Caribbean coast, Colombians live and breathe rhythm and melody, and there's no better way to discover the heart of this vibrant country than through its music.

Cocora Valley, Colombia.

SIX Essential Colombian Musical Experiences

Colombia's rhythmic diversity is so great that music-lovers could easily spend weeks in a single region and barely scratch the surface of its musical traditions. Here's a handful of standout experiences that simply cannot be missed.

1.

Dance Salsa in Cali

No musical tour of Colombia is complete without a visit to the salsa capital of the world, whether you choose to get hands-on and take classes at a local dance school or shake your stuff in one of the city's hundreds of salsa clubs.

2.

"Rumba" in Bogota

The capital city of Colombia, Bogota is a melting pot of cultures and musical genres: a perfect starting point when exploring the country's diverse music. From massive electronic clubs to bars showcasing the best live music from all of Colombia's regions, a weekend in Bogota is a hip-shaking good time.

3.

Sing to Cows in Los Llanos

Ride horseback across the vast Eastern Plains with *llanero* cowboys while they sing a capella to the cattle. This traditional practice has been named an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

Bahia Solano, Colombia.

4.

Visit San Basilio de Palenque

The village of San Basilio de Palenque is known as the birthplace of champeta and, as such, is one of Colombia's most important musical destinations. Here you can pay a visit to legendary musicians like Sexteto Tabala, as well as new groups like Kombilesa Mi, who rap in a mixture of Spanish and the local language, Palenquero.

5.

The Carnival of Barranquilla

No musical trip to Colombia would be complete without a trip to the *Carnaval*. Colombia's most important festival is also the second-biggest carnival in the world. For four raucous days the coastal city of Barranquilla gives itself over entirely to music, dancing and celebration.

6.

Amazonian Music in Leticia

Once a year in November, indigenous people of the Colombian Amazon gather in the jungle city of Leticia for the International Festival of Amazonian Popular Music.

FEEL IT

Vallenato

Vallento is perhaps Colombia's most emblematic folk music genre. During the Vallenato Legend Festival in April, the city of Valledupar takes their passion for the accordion to a whole new level as the top vallenato musicians duel it out to be crowned the country's best accordion player.

Where to go: The Museum of the Accordion in Valledupar.

Joropo

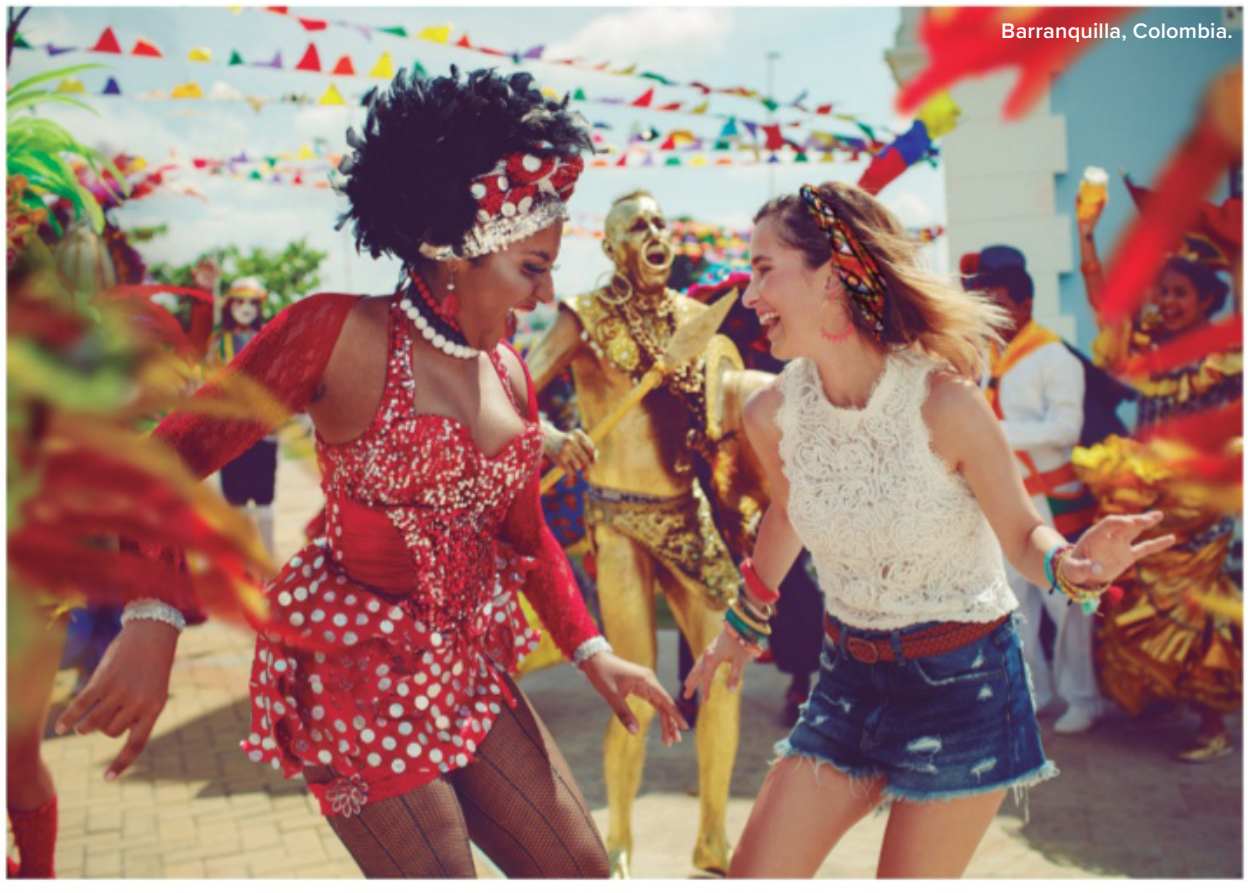
The rhythm of Colombia's Eastern Plains is played on stringed instruments like the harp and the cuatro, a small four-stringed guitar, with maracas providing the beat. The cowboys of this region often sing joropo songs while crossing the plains on horseback.

Where to go: The International Joropo Tournament in Villavicencio.

Cumbia

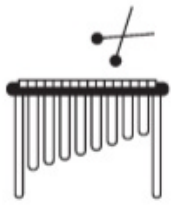
A mixture of indigenous and African musical influences, cumbia is traditionally played by three different drums and the gaita flute. It's one of the most iconic genres of the Caribbean coast and is especially popular in Santa Marta and the Guajira Peninsula.

Where to go: Tayrona National Park.



Barranquilla, Colombia.

Tayrona National Park, Colombia.



Currulao

Currulao is played on marimbas handmade from the wood of the Chonta palm and is the most important genre of the Pacific region. Dancing to the rhythms of currulao on the Pacific coast is a magical musical experience in Colombia.

Where to go: Petronio Alvarez Festival in Cali.

Champeta

Originating from Afro-Colombian communities nestled along the Caribbean coast, champeta has evolved from its early folkloric roots to become one of the most popular genres in the discos of Cartagena and Barranquilla. Champeta parties often take place on the street, with the music booming out of soundsystems known as *picós*.

Where to go: Cartagena.

Reggaeton

The new-kid-on-the-block is an intoxicating blend of dancehall and hip-hop.
Many reggaeton artists like J. Balvin, Maluma and Karol G have found international fame in recent years and taken the genre from the streets of Medellin to dancefloors around the world.

Where to go: Medellin.

COLOMBIA

HEAR IT

Discover the diverse rhythms

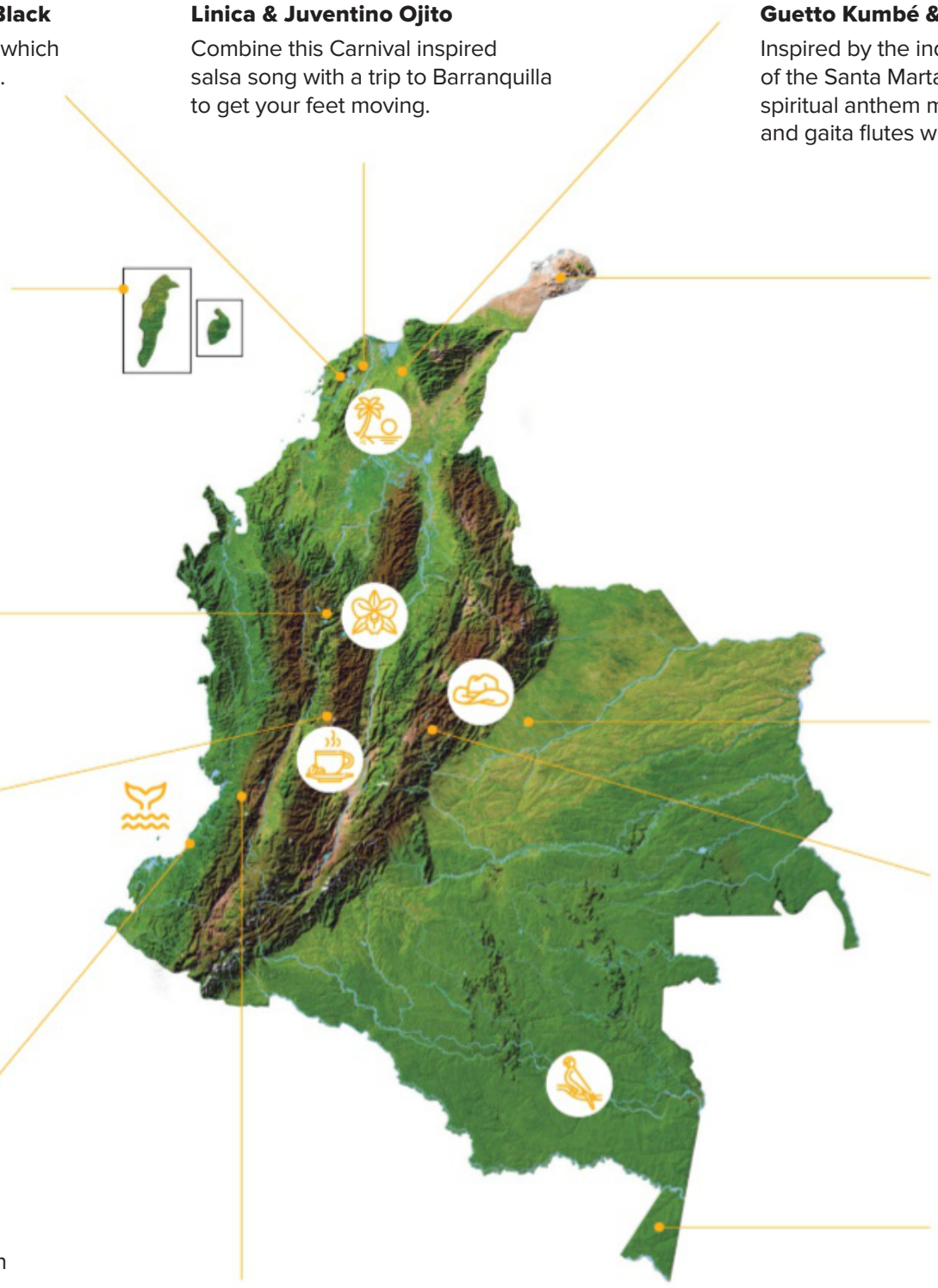
of Colombia with this geographical playlist showcasing the best of cumbia, champeta, joropo and more.

Yo Me Voy a Cartagena
Martina La Peligrosa & Mr. Black
A joyful, lilting champeta track which is sure to get your feet moving.

Vida Hay una Sola
Linica & Juventino Ojito
Combine this Carnival inspired salsa song with a trip to Barranquilla to get your feet moving.

El Alma del Mundo
Guetto Kumbé & EKA
Inspired by the indigenous cultures of the Santa Marta Mountains, this spiritual anthem mixes African drums and gaita flutes with electronic beats.

Feeling Happy
Elkin Robinson & Alkilados
Upbeat Caribbean folk from the island of San Andres and Providencia, this tune is sure to put a smile on your face.



Yo Me Voy Pa' La Guajira
Niños de la Fundación Cultural Sendero de Acordeones
With the guacharaca providing the backbone, the accordion is the star on this classic number from the desert peninsula of La Guajira.

Una Eterna Primavera
Puerto Candelaria
This jaunty number from Medellin is the perfect soundtrack for a visit to 'The City of Eternal Spring'.

Inmensa Llanura
Cholo Valderrama
El Cholo is perhaps the most well-known joropo musician in Colombia. This epic track takes his ode to the culture of the plains and adds a modern twist.

Fly away
Maia & Irie Kingz
You won't need a strong coffee to dance to this one. The pulsating rhythms of 'Fly Away' are the ideal accompaniment for a trip through the rolling hills of the Coffee Region.

Simples Corazones
Fonseca
This fusion of Caribbean rhythms with modern pop is the perfect song to sum up the modern metropolis that is Bogota: where people from all over Colombia come together to feel the rhythm.

Corazón Pacífico
Herencia de Timbiquí
The marimba is prominent on this inspiring ode to Colombian Pacific culture and identity.

Los cantos del agua
Juan Pablo Vega & Maria Mulata
A modern take on the traditional choral songs of the Amazon region, this song transports listeners straight to the heart of the jungle.

Cali es Sabrosura
Yuri Buenaventura & La Mambanegra
'Cali is flavor' according to this sizzling salsa track, and after hearing it you'll be hard pressed to deny this.

Discover the rhythms of Colombia through these music videos: COLOMBIA.TRAVEL/VIDEOS

Watch the first documentary with a soundtrack inspired by Colombian birds: COLOMBIA.TRAVEL/BIRDS-DOCUMENTARY

FURTHER

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In the Loop

Perched on a hill of old mining slag, the sculptural steel walkway "Tiger & Turtle—Magic Mountain" (pictured) gives a new perspective on the city of Duisburg, **Germany.** In nearby Bottrop, there's no ignoring the "Tetraeder," a 200-foot-tall, walkable steel pyramid rising out of a mine dump. Both cities lie in the Ruhr region of western Germany, whose coal and steel operations fueled the nation's industrial success between the 1930s and '80s. Today, coal mining has screeched to a halt, but the region is spinning fresh stories around its legacy by repurposing sites into cultural attractions. Another to visit? Essen's Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex, now a hub for art, concerts, and sports.

—Sunaina Kumar

MARTIN KIRCHNER/LAIF/REDUX

TRAVEL BETTER CREDIT CARDS

You might be surprised to learn that one of the most helpful travel tools is something you already use every day—the credit card tucked into your wallet. You can earn more points from a single credit card sign-up bonus than from years of flying and staying in hotels. Rewards cards also provide benefits such as free checked bags and room upgrades. With cards ranging from basic to premium, there are options for every type of traveler. Here are some tips on picking the right one for your needs.

The average credit card holder has at least two rewards cards.

25 TRILLION

By some estimates, trillions of unused miles languish in travelers' frequent-flier accounts.

20 MILLION MILES

Tom Stuker, the world's most frequent flier, has hit the 20 million–mile mark with United Airlines.

15 PERCENT

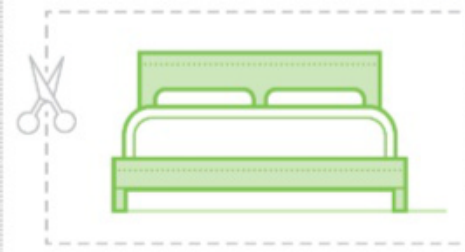
According to a recent Harris Poll, only 15 percent of Americans have used points to pay for a trip.

LOUNGE ACTS

Hate hanging around the gate while you wait to board a flight? Airlines including American, Delta, and United offer credit cards (with annual fees) that include access to their own lounges, while premium cards such as the Chase Sapphire Reserve and Citi Prestige will get you into Priority Pass lounges at airports around the world.

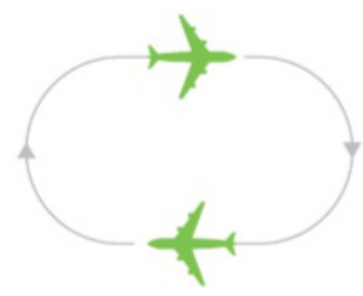
FEE FREE

Some credit cards levy foreign transaction fees of one to 3 percent on purchases made abroad. Look for cards—American Express Gold Card, Uber Visa—that waive such fees.



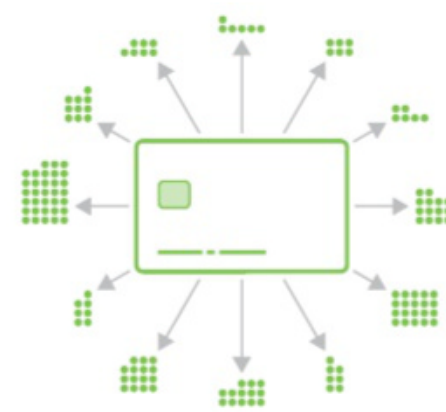
INTO THE NIGHT

Hotel cards like the World of Hyatt and Marriott Bonvoy Boundless confer an annual free night that can be worth hundreds of dollars—more than enough to offset their annual fees.



IT TAKES TWO

Alaska Airlines Visa Signature, Delta Reserve, and other cards come with an annual companion ticket benefit that can save you hundreds of dollars on round-trip fares in the United States.



THE MORE THE MERRIER

If you're not loyal to a single airline or hotel, choose a credit card that earns points you can transfer to various travel partners, such as American Express Membership Rewards (22 partners including Delta and Hilton) or Chase Ultimate Rewards (12 partners including United and Hyatt).

FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT

These days in-flight buys of snacks, drinks, and movies can add up, but many airline cards, including the AAdvantage Aviator Red and the JetBlue Plus Card, provide discounts of 25 to 50 percent.

MATTHEW TWOMBLY (ILLUSTRATIONS)

REPORTED BY ERIC ROSEN

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EXPLORER'S GUIDE
GIRAFFES

An alert Nubian giraffe stands tall in Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda.

High Life

The world's tallest mammal turned heads three years ago after being classified as "vulnerable" for the first time. Now the U.S. is considering protecting giraffes under the Endangered Species Act. Travelers can lend a hand, says Arthur Muneza, a National Geographic grantee and the East Africa coordinator for the Giraffe Conservation Foundation. "You can help scientists refine population counts," he says, by posting photos with location details on *giraffespotter.org,* which identifies unique coat patterns. Here are three of his favorite places to see the graceful ungulates.

—Katie Knorovsky

1 Uganda

Well known for its gorillas and chimpanzees, Uganda is a wonderland for other wildlife, too. Around 1,500 Nubian giraffes roam the country's biggest nature reserve, the "stunningly beautiful" Murchison Falls National Park, Muneza says. Giraffes convene along the banks of the Nile River, which squeezes through a narrow gorge before plummeting into the Devil's Cauldron.

2 Kenya

Head to the lush Lambwe Valley of Ruma National Park to track Kenya's largest wild population of Nubian giraffes. "On my first visit, I encountered a herd of more than 75," Muneza says. Framed by the dramatic Mathews Range, the Namunyak Wildlife Conservancy harbors an abundance of animals, including the reticulated giraffe, with its distinctive coat of orange-brown patches and white lines.

3 Tanzania

Thousands of Masai giraffes crisscross Ruaha, East Africa's largest national park. "Probably one of the last truly wild areas, Ruaha is remarkable," Muneza says. The pristine habitats range from savanna, woodlands, and wetlands to semiarid areas. "Giraffes are found at almost every corner."

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RONAN DONOVAN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION (GIRAFFE); MATTHEW TWOMBLY (ILLUSTRATION)

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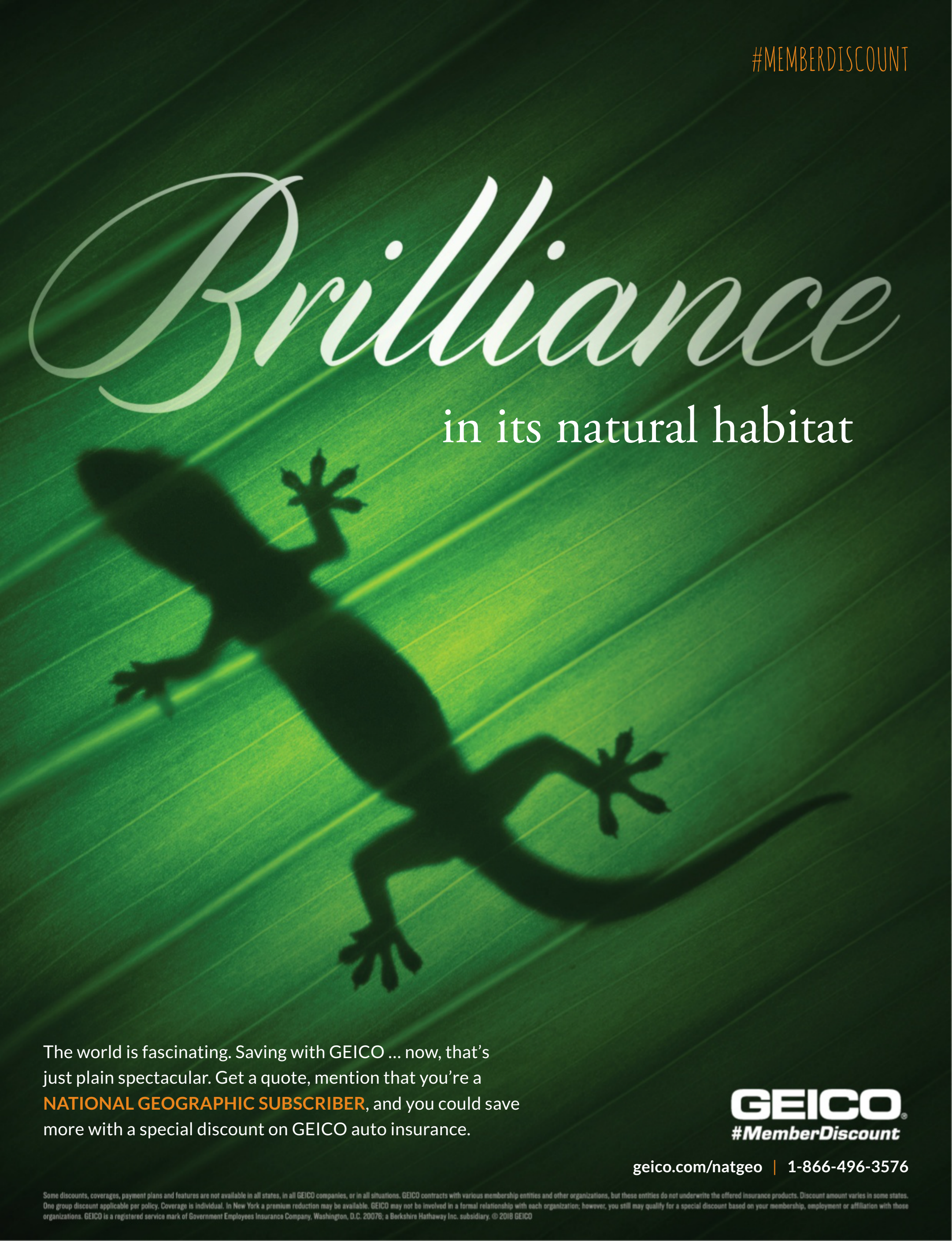
in its natural habitat



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CITY GUIDE

QUITO

Why Go Now: Boutique hotels and Novo-Andean cuisine are reaching new heights in Ecuador's capital

Wedged into the folds of the Andes, the world's second highest capital city (surpassed only by La Paz, Bolivia) contains the best preserved Spanish colonial core in the Americas. Despite this, travelers tend to overlook Quito as they make their way to the country's Pacific islands treasure, the Galápagos. But times are changing, and this city of two million is having a moment.

A burgeoning food scene, new boutique hotels, and a subway slated to open by year's end are encouraging visitors to explore this modern city with an ancient soul. "Quito is best understood as a collection of diverse neighborhoods united under a volcano," says Jorge Vinueza, of Ecuadorian travel magazine *Ñan*. "These elements give it a unique energy that you only have to walk its streets to feel."

The city's UNESCO-designated center is a rabbit hole of riches, but don't stop there. Take the *teleférico* to the top of the volcano. Stock up on textiles at the Artisanal Market. And on weekends, make like the Quiteños and head out of town.

—Norie Quintos

The neo-Gothic spires of the Basílica del Voto Nacional tower over Quito's historic center.

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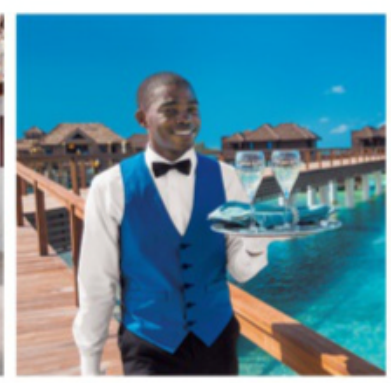
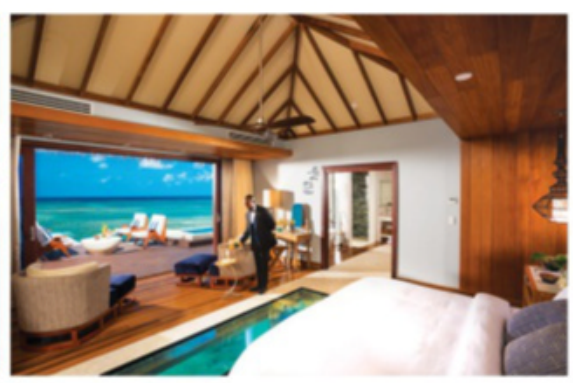

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Panama hats were born in Ecuador, where they're still woven by hand from toquilla straw.

La Floresta

A barrio with everything essential: coffee, culture, and *chismes* (gossip)

A hacienda estate until the early 1900s, this wildflowered area was one of the first neighborhoods to emerge as the city expanded beyond its colonial borders between the World Wars. There are ornate Italianate mansions, low-slung early modernist houses, and high-rise apartment buildings. Artists and creatives began moving in some 20 years ago to give it the alternative, indie vibe it has today. "The first inhabitants of La Floresta brought with them the spirit of the historic center, the *panaderías, cafeterías, lavanderías, sastrerías*—what we call *oficios,* or trades," says Vinueza. "Along with the more recent graffiti artists, musicians, and filmmakers, it's what gives this barrio its aliveness."

You don't need an elaborate plan. Just wander. You might decide to take in an art film at the pioneering **OCHOYMEDIO THEATER** or visit the offices of travel magazine **ÑAN** to purchase some authentic souvenirs staff picked up during their sojourns throughout the country. Scoop up designer-made decor from **LIBERTINA TIENDA GALERIA** or sample superfoods like quinoa at **VEGANO DE ALTURA** and chocolate at **HOJA VERDE.** Time for *un cafecito* (a black coffee)? Head to **JERVIS** or **BOTÁNICA.** For a free guided stroll of the neighborhood, check out **QUITO STREET TOURS.**

Room Check

- TRENDY
- NEW
- CLASSIC

LE PARC HOTEL

This sleek spot in New Quito's Benalcázar neighborhood is walking distance to *crêperies*, cafés, and high-end shopping, as well as La Carolina, the city's version of Central Park, ideal for strolling and jogging. Well-appointed rooms feature mid-century modern furniture.

HOTEL MAMA CUCHARA

One of the city's newest boutique hotels grew out of an old house in the traditional working hood of La Loma Grande, near many of the sites in the historic center. The house once harbored conspirators of the 1875 assassination of President Gabriel García Moreno. Now remodelers have reversed years of neglect and incorporated contemporary architecture to create a structure that evokes history without replicating it. Ecuadorian art adorns the rooms, and the restaurant's menu changes daily to highlight dishes from different provinces.

CASA GANGOTENA

With its prime location on Plaza de San Francisco—the heart of the historic quarter—this is undoubtedly the best address in the city. The former palace home of presidents and landowners was rebuilt in art nouveau style with art deco touches and eventually turned into a 31-room hotel. Don't miss the rooftop terrace for unfettered views of the old town.

ROBERT VAN DER HILST/GETTY IMAGES (HATS); PREVIOUS PAGE: WILLIAM HEREFORD (CHURCH); TAMER KOSELI (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS)

EAT IT QUITO

Buen Provecho

Four ways to eat well, from street food to Novo-Andean

Café Society

1 Quiteños drink coffee all day long (and don't even think about ordering decaf). Try the cafeterías in Plaza Grande for people-watching. Serious coffee lovers should head to **Café Galletti Teatro Bolívar,** a family-run business that works with small fincas. To warm up on chilly nights, select one of three popular hot drinks: *canelazo* (made with sugar cane alcohol), *vino hervido* (mulled wine), or *chocolate con queso* (yes, with cheese). Sip them with dazzling city views at **Pim's Panecillo** or **Cafe Mosaico.**

Getting Creative

2 Long overshadowed by Lima, Quito's food scene is now making headway. Inventive chefs such as Alejandro Chamorro of **Nuema** are elevating Novo-Andean cuisine using products of coast, sierra, and jungle and reinterpreting indigenous and Spanish colonial traditions. At **Chulpi,** Carlos Saltos dishes out fresh takes on street food in a small house in the residential Las Casas neighborhood. Don't miss the pairing menu at **Quitu,** chef Juan Sebastián Pérez's altar to Ecuadorian gastronomy.

Street Scene

3 For a dollar or two, you can feast like a king on Ecuador's *comida callejera,* or street food. Different areas have their specialties, so make like a local and nosh on *tripa mishqui* (chewy but flavorful tripe) at outside stalls in **La Vicentina;** quesadillas (more of a pastry, nothing like the Mexican dish) in **San Juan;** candies from **Las Colaciones de la Cruz Verde** (try the so-called *caca de perro*—"dog poop"); and cookies made by the Carmelite nuns at the **Carmen Alto convent** in the historic center.

Hot Cocoa

4 Chocolate may well have originated in the Ecuadorian Amazon, but only in recent years have homegrown chocolate companies refined and developed the raw product. The most well known of them, **Pacari,** offers a two-hour minicourse in its historic downtown store that includes making and packaging your own organic truffles. Other chocolate houses worth visiting: **República del Cacao, Chez Tiff, Hoja Verde,** and fair-trade shop **Tianguez** (located under San Francisco church).

At Quitu, chef Juan Sebastián Pérez (left) sweetens his tasting menu with chamomile ice cream.

WILLIAM HEREFORD (CHEF, ICE CREAM)

The High Points

Explore a city of historic splendor in a region of natural wonder

Fine Arts

Quito has marvelous museums, including the **Museo de la Ciudad** and the **Museo Nacional del Banco Central,** but don't overlook these two under-the-radar gems: The **Casa del Alabado** showcases the surprising and sophisticated workmanship of pre-Columbian art within an elegant Spanish colonial house. And **Casa Museo Guayasamín** displays paintings and murals at the home of Ecuador's most famous 20th-century artist, Oswaldo Guayasamín.

Fresh Air

Despite its notoriously fickle weather (keep a rain jacket in your day pack), Quito often sees the sun. After you've acclimatized to the altitude, take the **teleférico** up the city's volcano, Rucu Pichincha, for a look around. Beloved by locals, centrally located **Parque La Carolina** has running trails, a man-made lake, and the orchid-filled **Botanical Gardens.** On Sundays, rent a bike and cruise Quito north to south on roads closed to traffic for the weekly **Ciclopaseo.**

Divine Sights

It could take weeks to see all of the city's churches. If there were a people's choice, it would be **San Francisco** church and plaza, its winged Virgin of Quito statue above the altar replicated to gigantic proportions on Panecillo Hill. But there's also the gleaming, gold-leaf-plated interior of **La Compañía,** built by the Jesuits in baroque style. If you don't fear heights, scale one of the towers of the **Basílica del Voto Nacional** for heavenly vistas.

Out of Town

All the volcanoes and lakes within a 60-mile radius encourage weekend jaunts. North of Quito is the world-famous **Otavalo** market; stay at the new Otavalo Hotel and arrange a guide for the textile and music workshops. South of Quito, adventurers can climb the majestic (and active) **Cotopaxi** volcano or take in the views from horseback at Hacienda El Porvenir. **Baños,** at the base of another volcano, Tungurahua, is known for its thermal springs.

An Ecuadorian cowboy, or *chagra,* from Hacienda El Porvenir rides by the Cotopaxi volcano.

WILLIAM HEREFORD

Walk the Line

Ecuador's equatorial encounters

The French-led Condamine expedition famously mapped the line between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres just 14 miles north of Quito, and visiting the official site, **La Mitad del Mundo,** is a popular excursion. A massive monument and bright yellow stripe of demarcation make for cool snaps straddling the line. The problem is the 18th-century explorers were about 800 feet off. To get closer, you'll have to go to the nearby **Intiñan solar museum,** a hokey attraction with mock physics experiments. For the most accurate GPS readings and scientific explanations, head to **Quitsato,** near Cayambe, site of a large solar clock and the best place to appreciate the gravity of where you are standing.

TAKING FOOD AS FAR AS IT CAN GO

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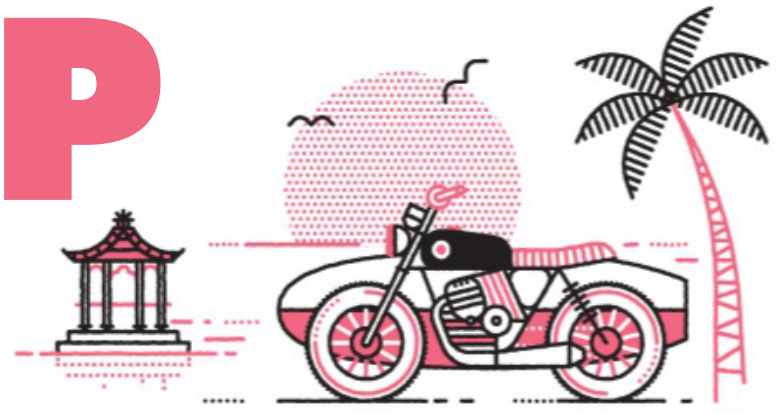
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

ROAD TRIP

BALI, INDONESIA



Miles: 230 • **Days on the Road:** 10 • **Sublime View:** Pura Luhur Uluwatu temple at sunset • **Pack-worthy Souvenir:** Handwoven ikat sarong

On Bali, known as the "Island of Gods," only a few miles separate river valleys thick with tropical flora and clifftop seascapes with indigo waves rolling in below. Even one hour on a scooter here can amount to the adventure of a lifetime.

These ubiquitous motorbikes are your ticket to weave through tiny villages and bamboo forests to discover cool waterfalls, hot springs, and ornate Hindu temples. (Bali is a predominantly Hindu island in mostly Muslim Indonesia.)

A road trip across this captivating land is a lesson in spirituality, joy, and letting go—Bali is not just a place but also a feeling. Cruising along at a leisurely pace gives ample time to soak up that energy. So prepare your prayer hands and practice your *"om swastiastu,"* the island's ultimate friendly greeting.

—Kathryn Romeyn

Snag a swing for sweeping views of Bali's Tegalalang rice terrace, near Ubud.

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Where to Next? Easy: Arizona

There's so much more to the Grand Canyon State than the Grand Canyon itself. To start with, there are 21 other national parks and monuments. There are also 45 national historic landmarks, 32 state parks, 22 American Indian communities, and one UNESCO World City of Gastronomy. Indulge your rugged side or your refined one—or both. Start planning your Arizona adventure at ***UnRealAZ.com,*** download the **Visit Arizona app,** or call **1-866-406-6741.**

ARIZONA
THE GRAND CANYON STATE

ROAD TRIP
BALI

1. ABIANSEMAL

Past Meets Future

The sense of freedom felt on a scooter can be overwhelming, so take it slow toward the first stop, north of Denpasar. This lesser known inland district embraces both classic Bali and its innovative eco-conscious side. Learn about sustainability initiatives on a guided tour of the **Green School** and the nearby **Kul Kul Farm,** where you can savor a lunch of just plucked produce. Then visit the workshop of famed jewelry label **John Hardy,** set on 400 lush acres studded with rice paddies, to see artisans create new designs using traditional techniques.

2. KELIKI

Cushy Camp

Outfitted with Dutch antiques and hand-hammered copper tubs, **Capella Ubud** may be the ultimate glamping experience. At this tented camp, built without displacing a single tree, dive into the saltwater pool that seems to float above the forest, before sampling Asian barbecue (with a side of theatrics) at the open-air *robatayaki* grill Api Jiwa.

3. UBUD

State of Peace

Combat Ubud's sensory overload with a stroll along **Tjampuhan Ridge,** electric green as far as the eye can see. Lunch on *tuna gohu,* a ceviche-like dish accented with pomelo and starfruit, and *bebek goreng* (fried duck) at the colonial-style **Hujan Locale.** Then pick up intricate indigo textiles and textured ceramics at **Ikat Batik** and **Kevala.** At the **Four Seasons' Sacred River Spa,** singing bowls signal the start of a chakra ritual that induces grounding through deep massage and a Balinese smoke ceremony. Sound sleep is virtually guaranteed inside **Bambu Indah** resort's enchanting "houses" by local architecture firm Ibuku, each a different design that blurs the line between indoors and out.

4. LAKE BRATAN

Mirror Image

While winding north to higher elevations, get a caffeine jolt at **Munduk Moding Plantation,** where the coffee-making tour is an education in Bali's famed java production. Next up is Hindu temple **Pura Ulun Danu Bratan,** beautifully reflected in the serene waters of its lake.

5. BANJAR

Soaking It In

At the **Banjar Hot Springs,** dip in terraced pools lined with streams falling from the mouths of toothy stone *naga* heads. Nearby, Bali's largest Buddhist monastery, **Brahmavihara-Arama,** is a meditation destination featuring golden Buddhas and vibrant gardens.

6. SINGARAJA

Fit for a King

On the island's north coast, Singaraja, meaning "lion king" in Indonesian, is the seat of the Buleleng regency, founded as a kingdom in the 1600s. From 1849 to 1953, the town served as a colonial capital for the Dutch, whose architecture informs the **Royal Palace,** open to visitors despite housing descendants of the regency's last royal family. The 1928 **Gedong Kirtya** library draws bibliophiles with its collection of ancient manuscripts, written on indigenous lontar palm leaves and addressing topics such as mythology, history, art, and daily life. Duck into the adjacent **Museum Buleleng** for its small collection of ceremonial masks and exhibits on the Dutch period.

GUILLERMO TRAPIELLO (MAP); PREVIOUS PAGE: ROMAN SIDORENKO (RICE TERRACE), TAMER KOSELI (ILLUSTRATION)

7. PENGLIPURAN

Getting an Eyeful

The sound of the alarm clock in the wee hours may be jarring, but this adventure is worth the early rise. Lace up your boots for a guided hike by flashlight up **Mount Batur.** As you approach the top, prepare for an epic vision of the sun rising over the volcano's fog-shrouded lake. Other nearby spots for scenic strolls include the frozen-in-time village of Penglipuran—home to the indigenous Bali Aga people—the fairy-tale **bamboo forest,** and the dramatic **Tukad Cepung** waterfall, reached by descending some 500 steps into a narrow gorge where beams of sunlight set the water aglow.

8. TEMPLE OF LEMPUYANG LUHUR

Local Highlights

Make a refueling stop at **Bali Asli,** whose name means "original." Though chef Penelope Jane Williams is an expat, she serves up authentic culinary experiences at this restaurant/school, where visitors cook over wood-fired stoves while learning about *bumbu* (a spice mixture)—be prepared for a kick! Continue on to Lempuyang Luhur, one of Bali's oldest, highest, and most sacred temples. Tackle the hike up or stay at the bottom for a photo against the iconic *candi bentar, a* split gateway. Then cool off at **Taman Tirta Gangga,** former royal bathing pools popular with locals.

Clockwise from top: baskets with offerings to the gods; a raw, vegan dish at the Fivelements resort; surfers at sunrise; a performer of Bali's traditional legong dance

TOM SCHIFANELLA (BASKETS), JAN RUDINSKY PHOTOGRAPHY (DANCER), KATE STASZCZAK (FOOD), CARSTEN SCHERTZER (SURFERS)

9. SUKAWATI

Time for Tradition

Villages here often have a specialty, and Celuk's is silver. The family-run **Prapen Jewelry Artifacts** compound is the place to watch silversmithing and even try your own hand at it. Pick up woodwork and textiles in the bustling **Sukawati Art Market,** and catch a performance of Bali's legendary *Barong and Kris* dance—depicting a mythical saga involving black magic—at nearby **Putra Barong.**

10. PADANG PADANG BEACH

The Life Aquatic

Drop in on daily displays of dance and gamelan music at the sprawling **Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park,** then follow the surfboard-toting motorbikes down to **Baby Padang** to score lessons and gentle first waves. (If you're experienced, go for Padang Padang or Impossibles.) Check in to clifftop digs at **Uluwatu Surf Villas** to gaze upon mesmerizing ocean vistas. A short drive to Bingin Beach reveals **Lucky Fish,** where you can sample the daily catch, sip a Bintang beer, and wiggle your toes in the sand. In Bali the simplest things are often the most magical.

BALI BY MOTORBIKE: TIPS FOR EASY RIDING

- Wear a helmet—beyond safety, it's the law.
- Bring an international driving permit, which will help you avoid any hassles at traffic stops.
- Remember to drive on the left side of the road.
- Use your horn boldly and often to signal your presence on blind turns.
- Go with the flow!

PLACES WE LOVE
MARQUESAS

Remote Paradise

These Polynesian islands inspire castaway dreams

Imagination runs wild in the Marquesas Islands, where green peaks plunge into the sea, waterfalls lace fragrant valleys, and dramatic rock spires jut into the sky. Although a part of French Polynesia, the Marquesas are proudly apart. You won't find overwater bungalows and turquoise lagoons on these 12 volcanic South Pacific islands, six of which are sparsely inhabited. Instead, in addition to a rich natural heritage, you'll discover distinctive cultural traditions in tattooing, dance, language, and horseback riding.

Horses were introduced to the island of Ua Huka in the mid-19th century, a gift from French admiral Abel Dupetit-Thouars, who brought them from Chile. Islanders tamed and adopted some over the years, and they became the perfect transport for traversing roadless valleys, steep slopes, and high ridges. Visitors can sign up with an outfitter leading horse treks or can simply spot horsemen like Jérémie Kehuehitu (pictured, on Hiva Oa) galloping their steeds on the beaches.

But a main attraction of these idyllic isles remains their isolation—the nearest continent is more than 3,000 miles away. *—Amy Alipio*

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Instrumental Exploits

How to bring global sounds home—from Vietnamese guitars to Russian accordions

By Robert Reid

A quarter century ago, while living in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, I saw an old blind man sitting in the middle of a busy intersection. As a stream of motorbikes and trucks spewing black exhaust whirred past, he plucked on an unusual electric guitar that had strings suspended above a carved-out fretboard. The melody was hauntingly beautiful. Spare notes, emanating from a miniature bullhorn, seemed to hang midair like a hummingbird before darting away. I had no idea what kind of music it was. But I've wanted one of those guitars ever since.

This is how I approach souvenirs when I travel. Instead of T-shirts, regional syrups, or customized belts from fifth-generation beltmakers, I buy local instruments. Many have found their way home with me: an Ethiopian lyrelike *krar,* a South African drum, an Indian wood flute, a Vietnamese *dan bau* zither, a Hong Kong gong, even an archaic Soviet hand-clap machine. This collection isn't

some mad attempt to build a museum of world music or even to master any new instrument I acquire (in more than three decades I've only learned a few chords on a guitar). It's become more about the chase itself.

In 1992 I enrolled in a Russian study-abroad program just after the fall of the U.S.S.R. I'd heard you could trade "Western" items for all sorts of things, so I packed some old jeans, cassette tapes, and—the big prize—a stained MTV jacket. One Saturday at the sprawling Izmailovsky Flea Market on Moscow's outskirts, I poked though random electronic parts, colorful polyester outfits, and assorted Soviet kitsch before coming across something truly glorious: a green push-button harmonium. Russians love accordions like these. The vendor's eyes opened as wide as mine when he saw the MTV jacket, and we quickly agreed to an even swap. And my travel obsession came to life.

I'm not the only one who chases music to its source. American banjo player Béla Fleck, for example, took his instrument to four countries in Africa, where the instrument's early origins began, to play it with local musicians. (It led to a couple of albums and the charming documentary *Throw Down Your Heart* a decade ago.) Around the same time, a Winnipeg couple discovered a music tourist milling about their front yard: Bob Dylan. He had come to Neil Young's childhood home to see if he could look out from Neil's bedroom window. They let him in. After all, who says no to Dylan?

I've always said that anyone looking to get a deeper sense of local life should simply follow a travel writer's approach. That is, treat an itinerary as a quest to try to learn or build something important to you. My quests tend to be musical. I made a road trip to Long Island, New York, based on Billy Joel lyrics, and created a (bad) rap song based on locals' descriptions of Saskatoon, Canada. Once I randomly took a cheap sky-blue clarinet to St. Lucia's jazz festival to see if I could get a lesson. The hunt ended at the Castries police station, where the police band clarinetist showed me how to play some Mozart.

Soon after moving back to Ho Chi Minh City last year, I started my hunt for that guitar I saw the blind man play all those years ago. Turns out, it wasn't hard to find. The murky origins of the *phim lom* (sunken fret) guitar, likely brought by the French in the 19th century, have been linked with Spain and possibly Indian *vina* music. In Vietnam it's still used for *vong co* (nostalgia for the past) music, which plays an integral role in a traditional Mekong Delta opera form called *cai luong*. (This year is the opera genre's centennial.)

A musician plays an Ethiopian *krar* in Addis Ababa. At left: a Hawaiian Kamaka ukulele.

DESIGN PICS INC/ALAMY (UKULELE), RWEISSWALD/GETTY IMAGES (KRAR)

Musical Sources

These three well-known instrument companies offer tours or exhibits. For additional music factories, visit *natgeotravel.com*.

STEINWAY & SONS

A German immigrant named Steinweg, who was a bugler at the Battle of Waterloo, started making pianos in New York in 1853. See Steinways being made at their factory in Queens.

C.F. MARTIN & CO.

In Nazareth, Pennsylvania, this German-American company has been producing acoustic guitars since the Andrew Jackson administration. Tours show the 300 steps it still takes to handcraft one.

KAMAKA UKULELE

Kamaka has been making Hawaiian ukuleles—an instrument adapted from Portuguese machete guitars—since 1916. The family-run factory operates in Honolulu.

You can easily buy these guitars online of course, or at Ho Chi Minh City music shops (one central street has more than two dozen luthiers making regular acoustic guitars). But I feel—and this could be the obsession talking—getting one just anywhere wouldn't be right.

In his book *How Music Works,* David Byrne (of Talking Heads fame) writes that environments specifically shape how music and instruments are born in a place. Experiencing them personally, he says, "tells us how other people view the world." Yes, I want a scalloped-fret guitar, but I want to find it in the place for which that guitar's quivering melody truly speaks.

To track down the heart of this guitar's music means taking a trip to Bac Lieu, a Mekong Delta town of 150,000 about five hours' drive from Ho Chi Minh City. They take music seriously. Google Maps photos show its central square dotted with oversize monuments of traditional instruments as well as a grand, modern theater honoring Cao Van Lau. This hometown hero put the genre on the music map. One of his most enduring folk songs—about a wife's lament for a husband away at war—is still regularly played on TV and at concerts today.

So I'm planning to visit Bac Lieu to see if one of those weird-looking guitars has my name on it. Even if I don't find one, I love knowing that the blind man's song is still floating in the Vietnamese air.

ROBERT REID *(@reidontravel) is an editor at large for* Traveler. *He writes about travel and music on* Tinkertowners.com.

LIKE A LOCAL
PORTLAND

Visiting Portland, Oregon, is a little like taking a master class in sustainability. Everywhere you turn, it seems there's a recycling bin, a bike-share rack, or a community garden. Whatever the metric—tree cover, renewable energy use, percentage of bike commuters—Oregon's largest city always comes out at or near the top of the list.

The city's green-is-good mindset was codified in 1980 by an Urban Growth Boundary established to keep sprawl in check. Today, residents revel in 385 miles of bike-friendly roads and paths, more than a dozen farmers markets, and a host of LEED-certified buildings. It's all served with a heaping helping of *Portlandia*-style eccentricity, of course: don't miss the vegan shoe stores and seed-to-table restaurants.

With a pledge to use 100 percent clean energy by 2050 and plans afoot to link to Seattle and Vancouver by high-speed rail, Stumptown's future is looking even smarter.

—Julian Smith

Run by two brothers, Luc Lac Vietnamese Kitchen serves up favorites such as pho and banh mi alongside creative cocktails in downtown Portland.

Eat

CHART THE CARTS

Pine Street Market, a modern food hall in Old Town, offers a cross section of homegrown culinary choices, from Korean BBQ at **Kim Jong Smokehouse** to soft-serve ice cream at **Wiz Bang Bar,** an offshoot of legendary **Salt & Straw.** Food carts are clustered in "pods" across town; head to Northeast Alberta Street for beef short rib over pasta at **Gumba** and a "summer breeze" juice from **Sip.** Some carts grow up to be restaurants like **Fried Egg I'm in Love,** which now plates its hearty sandwiches in a brick-and-mortar spot on Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard.

Stay

SMALL WONDERS

Two "tiny house" hotels on the east side of town apply the smaller-is-better philosophy to accommodations. Both offer buildings with footprints of less than 200 square feet, but they come complete with full bathrooms, firepits, and local art. At **Caravan,** choose from lodgings such as the Amazing Mysterium, modeled after a traditional Romany wagon, and the shingled Skyline, built from salvaged materials. A favorite at **Tiny Digs** is the Japanese-themed Bamboo, featuring a koi pond and shoji-screen door. Downtown, **The Nines,** an elegant LEED Silver hotel, is powered entirely by renewable energy.

City scenes (clockwise from top): biking the Eastbank Esplanade along the Willamette River, a Lilliputian lodging at Tiny Digs, hiking in Forest Park, ice cream from Wiz Bang Bar

LEAH NASH (RESTAURANT, RIVER, FOREST), TINY DIGS (COTTAGE), SALT & STRAW (ICE CREAM); NG MAPS

Play

JOY RIDES

The first move is obvious: snag a bike. The orange racks of the **Biketown** shared bike system are everywhere, giving access to many miles of urban exploration. It's a climb to **Forest Park,** but the views from one of the country's largest city parks are worth it. At the other end of the spectrum is **Mill Ends Park,** the world's smallest, a two-foot-wide patch of flowers in the median strip of Southwest Naito Parkway. Other offbeat destinations include **Mike's Museum of Motion Picture History,** home to the knife from *Psycho,* and **Oaks Park,** an amusement park that has been in continuous operation since 1904.

Shop

UNCOMMON GOODS

Portland has a serious DIY streak when it comes to the creative arts. Both outposts of **Crafty Wonderland** offer wares handmade by more than 250 local creators, while **Artistic Portland** is a downtown cooperative that stocks jewelry, fashion, and crafts. For eccentric souvenirs, head to the **Freakybuttrue Peculiarium** in the Slabtown neighborhood: part museum, part art gallery, part gift shop and part ice cream parlor, it's pure Portland. Need a vampire-killing kit or a selfie with Sasquatch? This is the place.

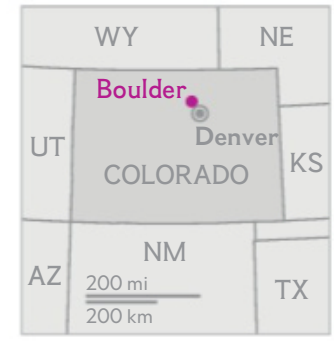
GREAT ESCAPES
BOULDER

Striking Gold

It's been 160 years since gold miners first made camp in what's now Boulder, Colorado, and the prospectors keep coming. These days they're lured by the 21st-century mother lode: a vibrant university town surrounded by thousands of acres of public land in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

West of the brick-paved Pearl Street pedestrian mall, the tile-and-sandstone University of Colorado buildings, and tree-lined neighborhoods of bungalows rise the Flatirons. These massive sedimentary slabs tilt skyward, beckoning hikers, rock climbers, and daydreamers.

The outdoor draw of this city of about 108,000—which has near-record densities of organic food producers, breweries, and Olympians—extends to runners, skiers, mountain bikers, road cyclists, and others seeking immersion in the open space that's nearly three times the size of the developed land. With a semiarid (read: mostly sunny) climate, Boulder has no off-season, just an occasional need to layer up before heading out. *—John Briley*



Outdoor adventures in Boulder include, from left, climbing the slanted slabs of the Flatirons, biking the Marshall Mesa Trail through protected grasslands, and tubing in Boulder Creek.

FREDRIK MARMSATER (CLIMBER), DANE CRONIN/TANDEM IMAGES (BIKERS), CAINE DELACY/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX (TUBING); NG MAPS

HIKE TO THE FLATIRONS

Chautauqua Park, lying below the Flatirons, is an heirloom from 1898, when residents voted to buy 80 acres in Boulder's first public land deal. But the real escape lies in the trails beyond the park, which are part of a 155-mile network managed by the city's Open Space and Mountain Parks department. "This is a biodiversity hotspot with the highest breeding bird densities in Colorado," says Dave Sutherland, the department's interpretive naturalist. From Chautauqua Meadow—dotted with wildflowers from April to October—hike into the pines and, legs and lungs willing, climb a thousand vertical feet to reach Royal Arch, a rock formation granting princely views of the Flatirons and the town.

HOP ON A MOUNTAIN BIKE

While Boulder has earned a reputation as a road-cycling mecca, the fat-tire crowd has cornered its own hilly terrain. One gem: Heil Valley Ranch, north of town, which features more than 15 miles of trail through meadows, pine-studded climbs and descents, and stretches of interlocked rocks. Once a quarry that yielded sandstone for the university buildings, Heil is now home to wild turkeys. Look for them scuttling through fields next to the trails. Closer to Pearl Street, the Betasso Preserve offers some nine miles of mostly single track, including a secluded section along Fourmile Creek. Newbies can roll to Marshall Mesa, south of town, to explore grasslands and airy forests.

SOAR ABOVE IT ALL

One of the surest ways to get high in Boulder is to take to the skies. "Gliding here is like surfing in Hawaii. There are few other places like it in the U.S.," says Brooks Mershon, manager and pilot at Mile High Gliding. The company offers flights in two motorless Schweizer 2-32s, one of which the U.S. Navy used for stealth surveillance during the Vietnam War. Summer thermals and winter westerlies create ideal conditions, allowing gliders to soar for hours. After being towed up by a small plane, you and your pilot (seated behind you) cut the cord and rise as high as 14,000 feet for bird's-eye perspectives on Boulder, Denver, and, if it's a clear day, dramatic peaks hundreds of miles west.

BEST LIST

AMERICAN ISLANDS

In search of an idyllic escape? Here are 21 amazing islands in 21 U.S. states and territories.

As an inveterate island explorer who's visited more than 130 of them for my Islands of America website, I'm a firm believer in the restorative power of escaping to places that leave the rest of the world behind. With islands offering beach walks, boat trips, sunshine, and saltwater, it's a wonder we travelers ever come home. In fact you could spend the rest of your life hopping around America's 20,000-plus named islands that feature everything from architectural wonders and seafood festivals to wild bison. The hundreds of barrier islands also perform an essential service, protecting the mainland from storm surges. Here are some of my favorite islands and why they make for great getaways.

—Anna Marlis Burgard

Maine's Monhegan Island waves the Stars and Stripes.

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BEST LIST
AMERICAN ISLANDS

ANTELOPE ISLAND

Utah The urban bustle of Salt Lake City fades fast on this nearby island featuring hiking, mountain views, and a herd of some 700 free-ranging bison. Each July, cyclists roll up for the 24-mile, family friendly Antelope by Moonlight bike ride.

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

Rhode Island While Newport gets the notice for its regattas, jazz festival, and Gilded Age mansions, this Narragansett Bay gem also offers peaceful spots such as the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge and Green Animals Topiary Garden, the nation's oldest.

AVERY ISLAND

Louisiana This bayou-bounded salt dome island is the home of Tabasco. You can tour the factory-museum and take a class on kicked-up local cuisine capped by a four-course meal. Make time for the 170-acre Jungle Gardens and its bird sanctuary.

BARANOF ISLAND

Alaska After a day of kayaking, hiking, salmon fishing, or exploring the Tlingit and Haida totem poles at Sitka National Historical Park, refuel with local fare (topped by Sitka Sound salt) at Ludvig's Bistro and well-spun tales at the Pioneer Bar.

CAPE MAY

New Jersey Cape May is both a peninsula and, yes, an island. Designated a National Historic Landmark, it's a Victorian-era jewel second only to San Francisco in the number of beautifully maintained "painted lady" houses. Down at the shore, the waves are perfect for body-surfing and skimboarding. Lucky beachcombers find Cape May "diamonds"—quartz crystal pebbles that have traveled down the Delaware River. Birder alert: More than 400 species have been recorded here, from egrets to sandpipers. Check out the guided tours and workshops with naturalists from the Cape May Bird Observatory.

CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND

Virginia This island is renowned for its Tidewater pace, oysters called "salts," and a horse named Misty. During July's Pony Swim, a fundraiser for the fire department, a feral herd crosses the channel from Assateague Island guided by "saltwater cowboys."

FIRE ISLAND

New York With evocative names like Kismet and Sailors Haven, the mostly car-free communities here draw families to lemonade stands, architecture buffs to modernist houses, drag queens to Fourth of July parades, and everyone to the famously fiery sunsets.

HATTERAS ISLAND

North Carolina Miles of pounding waves and protected National Seashore make this a destination for kiteboarding, surfing, and casting for red drum. Don't miss The Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum with its exhibits on shipwrecks of the Outer Banks.

KIAWAH ISLAND

South Carolina The theme is Low Country luxury on this island with 40 miles of bike paths, world-class golf courses, and pampering spas. Claim a table at The Ocean Room for a tender steak paired with a selection from the well-stocked wine cellar.

LĀNA'I

Hawaii Discover natural wonders such as the fog-cloaked boulders at Keahiakawelo (aka "the Garden of the Gods"), leatherback sea turtles in the surf, and rainbow eucalyptus trees with their brightly colored bark.

MACKINAC ISLAND

Michigan Insulated from the outside world by its massive Lake Huron moat, this carless island attracts visitors who walk, bike, or take horse-drawn carriages to Fort Mackinac, Arch Rock, the butterfly conservatory, and a dozen shops for handmade fudge.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

Massachusetts On this island popular with A-listers, take in Chilmark's farmland, Vineyard Haven's shipwrights, and Edgartown's dining scene (try elegant L'Etoile). In August, Grand Illumination Night sets Oak Bluffs' gingerbread cottages aglow.

A Georgia barrier island, Tybee is famed for its sandy beaches.

TAYLOR GLENN/REDUX (BEACH), YAY MEDIA AS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (BISON); PREVIOUS PAGE: TED HOROWITZ/GETTY IMAGES (FLAG), TAMER KOSELI (ILLUSTRATION)

Bison herds roam Antelope Island in Utah's Great Salt Lake.

MONHEGAN ISLAND

●● **Maine** This lobstering island of some 60 residents has been a destination for artists (Edward Hopper, Jamie Wyeth) drawn by the seclusion and the scenery. Wander fir-needle paths through Cathedral Woods and trails that wend up to cliffs with a view.

OFU

●● **American Samoa** For a far-flung escape without the hassle of currency exchange, travel to this remote island in the South Pacific where you can snorkel with sea turtles and blue devils above technicolor coral at the National Park of American Samoa.

PADRE ISLAND

●● **Texas** Stretching 113 miles, Padre is the world's longest barrier island. The populated southern end is famous for its wide white sand beaches (and its intense sand castle competitions). Kiteboarding, windsurfing, and paddleboarding rank among the popular pursuits. Other good bets: Watch shrimp trawlers return home through the Brazos Santiago Pass; visit Sea Turtle, Inc., a rescue, rehabilitation, and release center; ride horses on the beach; or embrace your inner child at Schlitterbahn Waterpark. On summer weekends, see fireworks and their reflections in Laguna Madre Bay.

PUERTO RICO

●● Two years after Hurricane Maria, the Caribbean island lures visitors with its spectacular sights, from San Juan's 16th-century Spanish fort and Rincón's seaglass-strewn beaches to Fajardo's bioluminescent bay, best seen on a nighttime kayak tour.

SANTA CATALINA ISLAND

●● **California** Just an hour's boat ride from Long Beach, Catalina seems a world away with its Mediterranean architecture, 60 unique species of flora and fauna (including an adorable five-pound fox), and activities from parasailing to paddleboarding.

STAR ISLAND

●● **New Hampshire** In its 19th-century Oceanic Hotel and stone cottages, guests of this Unitarian Universalist retreat island meet for history, science, and arts workshops. Free time fills with communal meals, porch sitting, and horseshoe throwing.

ST. GEORGE ISLAND

●● **Florida** Lying between the Gulf of Mexico and Apalachicola Bay, SGI has rejected high-rises in favor of beach houses with names like "M'Ocean Granted." Relax at the state park, then stock up at Dail's Seafood Trailer and Weber's Little Donut Shop.

TYBEE ISLAND

●● **Georgia** Spirited events take place year-round, such as May's 20,000-person water fight. But the island's also a haven for birders and kayakers. Be sure to stop by the Tybee Island Light Station and Museum and the Tybee Post Theater.

WHIDBEY ISLAND

●● **Washington** Along the 55-mile stretch from Deception Pass State Park to Possession Sound, you'll find the best of town and country. Peruse Moonraker Books, walk the labyrinth at the Whidbey Institute, and watch for orcas surfacing in Saratoga Passage.

Best for: ● Outdoor Adventure ● Wildlife Sightings ● Old-fashioned Charm ● History and Culture

GORDON RAMSAY

Digging In

In his new show, chef Gordon Ramsay goes globe-trotting to explore cultures and cuisine

"Food is the foundation," Ramsay says. "It gives rounded insight into the actual culture of a place." He should know, after taking deep dives into the food scenes of six destinations around the world for the new National Geographic television series *Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted,* making its premiere July 21.

The 52-year-old British-born chef, famed for his Michelin-starred restaurants and intense competition shows like *MasterChef,* traded tricked-out kitchens and TV studios for "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore and reconnect" with the source of ingredients. Since Ramsay believes in learning by doing, he followed the lead of locals on sometimes harrowing expeditions, such as perching precariously on a mountainside in Peru to harvest the specific cactus needed for a particular dish. The Ironman athlete admits he felt vulnerable at times. "It looks crazy," he says, "but it's what they do on a daily basis."

The people Ramsay met, and their resourcefulness and respect for ingredients, made a deep impression on him. What's his advice to travelers? "Stay off the high streets," he says. Be adventurous, and seek out what really defines the culture. Here he offers some takeaways and tips for each destination in the series.

—Brooke Sabin

ROBIN SMITH/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTOGRAPH

Grape vines thrive on the Banks Peninsula of New Zealand's South Island.

GORDON RAMSAY

New Zealand

"The hangi is my new favorite way to cook meat," says Ramsay. "Dig a hole, light a fire, bury the meat, and go enjoy a few hours relaxing." Methods for this traditional Māori way of cooking have been handed down for generations, and the hangi is still used to prepare meals on special occasions. Ramsay also marvels at how Māori cook with seaweed in inventive ways—and how they retain these techniques in their modern-day culture. Smoked eel, he says, is another best bite. And be sure to sample the sips. "New Zealand has some of the best local wines."

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Matt Brock of Kika restaurant in Wanaka, known for seasonal, tapas-style dishes

Alaska

One of Ramsay's most memorable moments came when he visited an indigenous Tlingit community. As he entered a family smokehouse, he saw that the 12-year-old daughter was "braiding with absolute, utter finesse" the 23-foot-long intestines of a seal so they could be smoked and later eaten. "You stop in time and just think, wow," he says. "It's how they will continue to survive across very dark, hard-core winters." For local fare requiring a less adventurous palate, he recommends Alaskan white salmon and gin from Juneau's Amalga Distillery, which has a lively tasting room. The owners forage many of the botanicals themselves. "A must try!"

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Beau Schooler of In Bocca Al Lupo restaurant, serving handmade pastas and pizzas in Juneau

Peru

"High altitude is no joke," Ramsay says. Even the pisco sour, a brandy-based tipple that's considered Peru's national drink, packs a more potent punch in the lofty villages dotting the Sacred Valley. But his greatest discovery in the land of the Inca? "The amazing diversity in potatoes. Each one was unique and different, and they were incredible to cook and eat," he says. Indeed, it's estimated that 4,000 types of potatoes grow in Peru, ranging from the pale *papa blanca* to the jewel-toned *papa púrpura*. But not everything succulent is starchy. Alpaca jerky, says Ramsay, makes a salty, satisfying snack.

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Juan Luis Martínez of Mérito, a restaurant in Lima that puts Venezuelan spins on Peruvian ingredients

GAETAN PENEC (DESSERT), BRENDAN SMITH (DRINK), EWEN BELL (RIVER)

Laos

Before the Mekong River empties into the South China Sea, it flows through six nations, including Laos. On his first trip to the country, Ramsay learned that "the Mekong is the lifeblood of the community. It's not only where a lot of the food comes from, but it's how you get to any location." The river is so key, in fact, that its name in Lao can be translated as "mother water." Along the banks, find historic temples, lush jungles—and tempting refreshments. But "don't drink the moonshine unless it's in a mixed drink," warns Ramsay. Do try the roasted bananas, which he calls "simple, delicious, and the perfect treat."

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Seng Luangrath, who's brought Laotian flavors to Washington, D.C., with her Thip Khao restaurant

Morocco

Think truffles, and you likely conjure up the forests of France or Italy. But these delicacies also grow in Morocco, says Ramsay, along with mushrooms such as morels, porcinis, and chanterelles. Head to cities' old quarters for produce and just about anything else. "The medina is full of diverse things," he says. "You can buy the most amazing olives and a vintage carpet all in one place." Don't forget to try Berber pizza, or *medfouna*, dough stuffed with meat, onions, and spices.

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Meryem Cherkaoui, of Marrakech's Mes'Lalla restaurant, specializing in new takes on local flavors

Hawaii

The best way to start the day in this Pacific Ocean archipelago? "Banana bread," says Ramsay. "It's the perfect morning snack with local coffee." While the Big Island's Kona coffee claims the spotlight, the rich volcanic soil supports several varieties. After fully caffeinated outdoor adventures that might include scuba diving or lava hiking, pull over for a meal. "Roadside dining is some of the best food," Ramsay says. His pick is barbecued and basted *huli-huli* chicken, devoured right by the water.

A CHEF TO WATCH:
Sheldon Simeon, of Maui's Lineage restaurant, dishing up his family favorites

MAURA SELENAK/@AMALGA DISTILLERY (BAR), ALEC JACOBSON (SALAD)

Left to right: an almond *pastilla* from Morocco's Mes'Lalla, a mai tai at Lineage in Hawaii, the Mekong in Laos, Alaska's Amalga Distillery, a salad at Peru's Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY JILL K. ROBINSON

WHY IT MATTERS
DIVERSITY

Calling All Stories

How diverse and inclusive perspectives make us better travelers

By Heather Greenwood Davis

A young American tourist who is an 11th-generation descendant of slaves looks out to sea from Fort William in Ghana, a launching point for the Atlantic slave trade.

This year hundreds of African Americans will board flights to Ghana. For many it will be their first trip to the African continent. They'll be answering a call issued by the West African country to come home. The ship believed to have carried the first enslaved Africans to what would become the United States of America set sail from Ghana. Four hundred years later, African Americans are yearning to understand better what and who was left behind. Ghana has declared 2019 as "The Year of Return."

I'm not an African American, but as a black woman living in North America, I understand the attraction of the invitation. It's no small thing to find a place in the world that wants to tell your story.

My history has always been impacted by race and travel. My parents emigrated from Jamaica to Canada in the '70s. My childhood included annual trips to spots across Canada, the U.S., and the Caribbean. Each time we ventured beyond our neighborhood, my parents—intentionally or not—drove home the idea that the world was mine to explore. My memories of travel focused on what I was seeing, not on how I was being seen. Warm welcomes were a luxury I took for granted.

As I got older I realized that for many before me—including my parents—that had not been the case. As children, they hadn't had the opportunities to travel that I was being afforded. And when as adults they did venture out, their kids in tow and far from their black-majority homeland, they were often met with prejudices I was too young to recognize.

Years later, my own travels around the world as a journalist helped me understand that the color of my skin is an integral part of my experience. The stories I write don't have to be overtly centered on race to share my perspectives as a racialized person.

Being a black traveler means that during a reporting stint in Ghana in my 20s a local leader could single me

out to share how much I look like a member of a nearby tribe. It means that in Ethiopia, Rwanda, England, and Northern Canada I am called "sister" (and treated as such) by people who can find a connection in my skin color.

It can also lead to experiences that are jarring and to opportunities that provoke conversation. In China and India, my hair and skin have stopped curious crowds.

Showcasing our similarities allows for the possibility of challenging stereotypes that go beyond travel (we swim, we ski, we hike).

I embrace all of these opportunities and the platforms that have allowed me to tell my stories, because I recognize that there aren't enough people who look like me who get the chance.

And that's a problem.

When voices are missing from the mainstream narrative, their absence is normalized. After more than 16 years as a travel writer, I still struggle to find other black storytellers in mainstream outlets.

This despite a 2018 report that African-American travelers, who make up about 14 percent of the U.S. population, spend around $63 billion a year on travel.

Many who have grown used to being an afterthought to prevailing conversations have carved out spaces of their own. It's how you get a *Green Book*—the printed annual handbook that, until its last issue in 1966, detailed the places that were safe for black road trippers to stop, eat, sleep, or stay out past dark.

It's what leads to the creation of Evita Robinson's Nomadness Travel Tribe, a lifestyle brand and community with a membership of 20,000 travelers of color. Or Outdoor Afro, founded by National Geographic Fellow Rue Mapp, which aims to reconnect African Americans with nature. It's why Karen Akpan's Black Kids Do Travel Facebook group exists—as a safe space for parents of color to share their travel triumphs and concerns. And although both Kellee Edwards and Oneika Raymond head up Travel Channel productions, the list of people of color as the face of any TV program in the industry is short.

Seeing and reading about people who look like us impacts how we travel because in those stories is the recognition that our lives—the accomplishments, hardships, history, and culture—matter.

But the stories of African-American travelers are essential for other reasons too. When mainstream travel pieces speak about safety, people of color know that we'll still need to save our questions about our particular fears for the direct messages of black friends and colleagues. ("Yes, I know the place is safe, but is it safe for *me*?") It's a system not unlike the ones friends in the LGBTQ community have developed.

After more than 16 years, I still struggle to find other black storytellers in mainstream travel media.

And so when I take my kids, two black boys, into the world, I do so with all of these questions, opportunities, and responsibilities in mind. We have traveled to dozens of countries together, snapping family photos in front of the Eiffel Tower, the pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, and Niagara Falls. I take them to places where their skin color is a fascination and to places where everyone looks like them. I've forced them into the travel narrative because they have every right to be there, but I also do it because I know that other families of color read our stories and, in our photos, see the possibilities available for themselves.

More diverse voices are needed, but you don't have to be a minority traveler to make a difference. Developing a more inclusive travel perspective requires no sacrifice. It isn't a charitable act; all travelers benefit when the fullest possible stories are told. And when we aren't getting the full narrative, we are all robbed of facts and experiences that could prove transformational in the way we see the world.

Tourists, travel providers, outlets, and agents need only recognize the potential for tunnel vision and ask themselves whether there are perspectives missing in what we are reading and watching. And then, make every effort to seek them out.

As you consume travel, ask yourself: On whom is the camera focused? Whose story is absent from the historical tour? And those of us with a platform—be it blog, social media, TV show, or magazine—must offer more opportunities for people of color to hold the pen, the microphone, and the camera.

Inclusion is a recognition that the whole story—with its flaws and complexities—is far more beautiful than its individual pieces.

Travel makes us better, and multiple travel perspectives make us better still.

Contributing editor **HEATHER GREENWOOD DAVIS** *(@greenwooddavis) is the Toronto-based founder of* globe trottingmama.com.

JANE HAHN FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES* (FORT); MATTHEW TWOMBLY (ILLUSTRATION)

CRUISING WELLNESS

Health & Happiness

As a balm for busy, stressful lives, travelers are turning to trips that bolster a sense of well-being. The wellness industry as a whole is valued at more than $4 trillion—and counting. Riding this wave, many cruise lines are bringing health to the high seas.

During the five-day "Wild Baja Escape" with **National Geographic Expeditions** in Mexico's Sea of Cortez, passengers practice seaside yoga and meditation. Heart-pumping options include hikes along pink ocean cliffs and kayak paddles through bays that are home to sea lions and turtles.

In addition to the Zen Wellness Studio on its new ship, *AmaMagna*, **AmaWaterways** now has "wellness hosts" throughout its Europe-based river fleet who guide fitness activities. In the dining rooms, travelers can opt for health-focused menus, sip various detox infusions from hydration stations, and down vitamin shots.

Seabourn partners with integrative medicine guru Andrew Weil on itineraries such as the 16-day "Wellness in Australia and New Zealand" departing from Auckland in February 2020. Weil and his team will lead active excursions and give advice on topics from mindful living to healthy aging.

Also in February, **MSC**'s *Divina* will sail from Miami for the 17th "Holistic Holiday at Sea" with talks by healers and nutritionists, plus cooking demos and movement classes. Taking it a step further, **Blue World Voyages** launches next year aiming to keep cruisers in top form with two full decks devoted to sports and wellness.

—Eric Rosen

Seabourn is one of several cruise lines putting a focus on good times and good health.

SEABOURN

GO WITH NAT GEO
CENTRAL AMERICA

Isla Palenque's beachfront pool lies next to a hammock lounge.

MIKE DELL

PANAMA

Treasure Island

Taking a cue from conservationists, eco hoteliers are trickling into this Central American country, where nearly a third of the land is protected in nature reserves. In 2017 the Costa Rica–based Cayuga Collection, a leader in sustainable lodgings, brought some of its innovative initiatives to a private island resort in the Gulf of Chiriquí. At **ISLA PALENQUE,** artisans at the on-site woodworking shop upcycle fallen trees into furnishings for the lodge's thatched bungalows. Meanwhile guests play pampered castaway, discovering hidden caves, humpback whales, and pre-Columbian pottery shards on jungle and ocean jaunts, then recharging with island-sourced fare and swinging daybeds back at the beachfront abodes. Bring island vibes but no single-use plastic—it's one of the few things banned from this welcoming wonderland. *—Alena Hadley*

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COSTA RICA

Inland Hideaway

Separated from the nearest road by rushing white water, **Pacuare Lodge** gives guests a chance to truly disconnect from civilization. Arrival is by hanging gondola or helicopter—or by tackling the river's Class III and IV rapids (a seasoned guide helms your raft). Keep the adrenaline pumping with canopy tours and waterfall hikes, and power down each evening in your tree-house suite lit by the glow of candles. *—Lindsay Kuczera*

COSTA RICA

Seaside Heights

Near the sandy shores of the Osa Peninsula, **Lapa Rios Lodge** sits in one of the most wildlife-rich areas of a country famed for its biodiversity. The Cayuga Collection property protects a thousand acres of rainforest, and guides lead excursions that range from birding tours and night hikes to dolphin watching. But the best view—of land and sea—may be from one of the 17 bungalows perched above the jungle. *—LK*

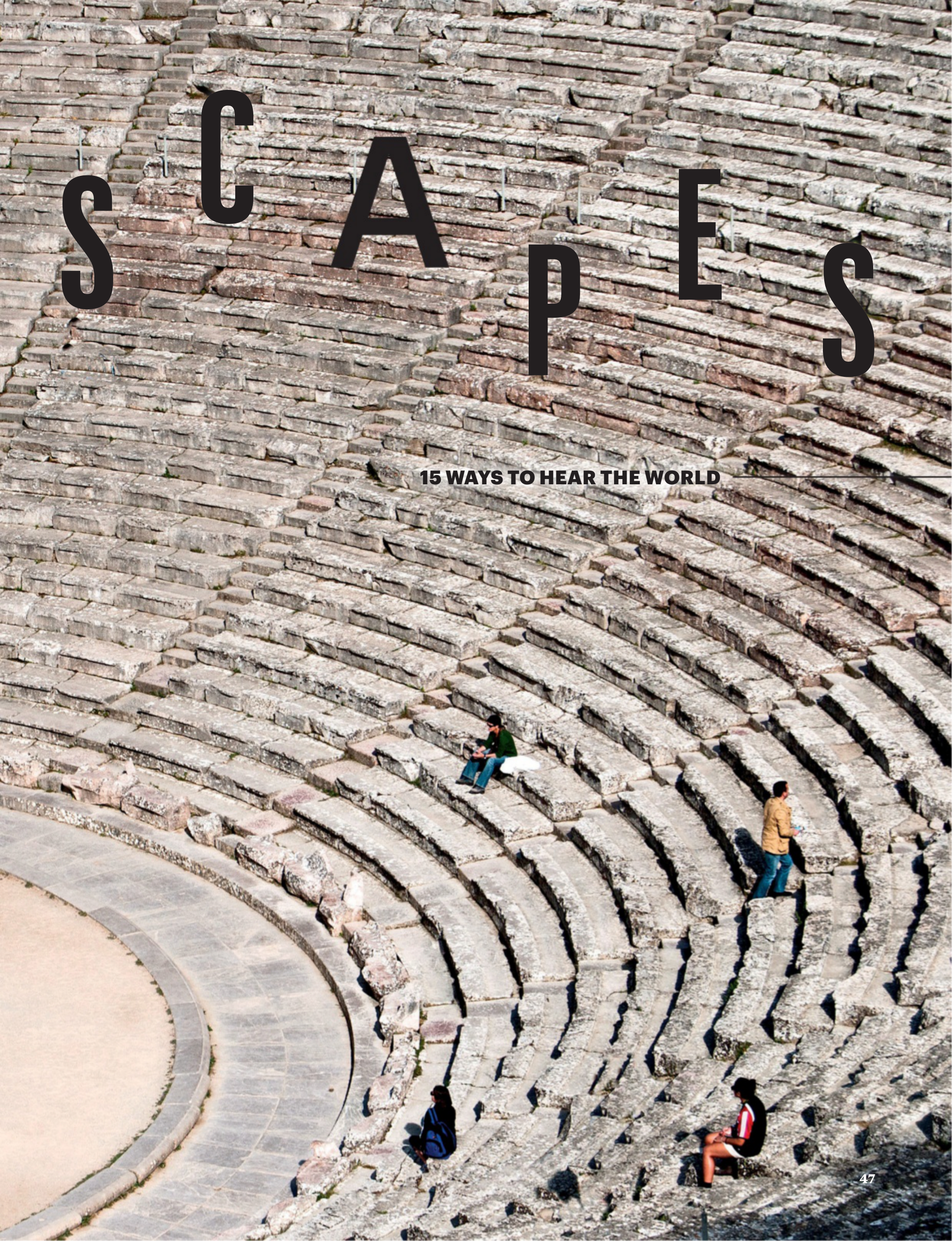
SOUND

Plan an acoustic journey to the planet's most musical spaces

By **Trevor Cox**

SCAPES

15 WAYS TO HEAR THE WORLD



SONIC WONDERS

In a world dominated by spectacle, what are the auditory equivalents of the Eiffel Tower, Stonehenge, or the Grand Canyon? Searching for an answer, we tuned into Trevor Cox, a British professor of acoustic engineering and an explorer of Earth's most amazing sound sites. "On vacation some years ago, I was leafing through a travel guide for sights to see and experiences to be had," he tells us. "It suddenly struck me that the book mentioned nothing about sound. It's easy to overlook how important what we hear is to our travels. After all, we have no 'earlids' and so our brain is always listening to the soundscape. If your ears chose your next holiday destination, where would they go?" Here he reveals 15 of his favorite places to visit for extraordinary sounds.

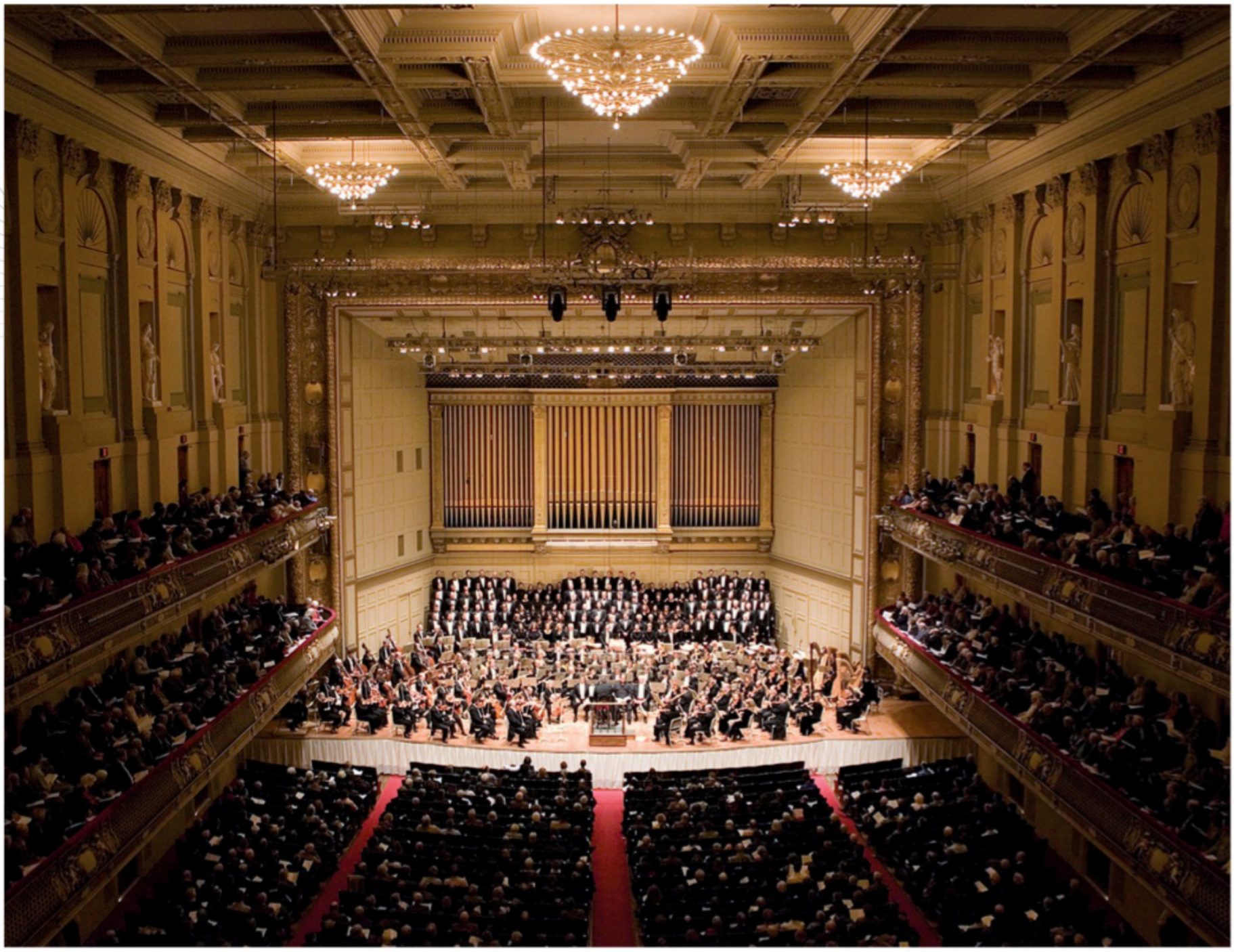
The red dot on the volume control knob indicates where each sound experience falls on our scale of quiet (left) to loud (right).

1. SERENGETI, TANZANIA

Gong Rocks

A xylophone made from stone might seem an unusual musical instrument, more likely to produce a disappointing clunk than a sonorous bong, but certain stones can make beautiful notes if the microscopic structure of the rock is right. Strike the rock gongs in the Serengeti, and you get a wonderful metallic clang. These large boulders are covered in percussive marks from thousands of years of use. Such "rock music" provides some of the earliest evidence of sounds our ancestors made.

DAVID PLUTH/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION (GONG ROCKS); MICHAEL J. LUTCH (HALL); SERGEY LOBODENKO/GETTY IMAGES (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS); PREVIOUS PAGES: NEVENA TSVETANOVA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (AMPHITHEATER)



2. EPIDAURUS, GREECE

Ancient theater

Dating from the fourth century B.C., the ancient theater at Epidaurus (shown on pages 46-47) is a Greek architectural masterpiece and one of the earliest structures that we know was designed with sound in mind. The steep banking and semi-circular shape get the audience as close to the stage as possible, in order to hear the performers better. Tour guides delight in demonstrating the theater's "perfect" acoustics, astonishing visitors as a pin dropped on the stage is heard toward the back of the vast amphitheater of stone seats.

3. VIJAYAPURA, INDIA

Whispering gallery, Gol Gumbaz

The grand 17th-century mausoleum of Gol Gumbaz is a testament to the power of Sultan Adil Shah, ruler of Bijapur, who is buried here. With its slender octagonal turrets at each of its four corners and a circular dome above, the tomb is a majestic sight. But people travel here for the chance to shout in its famed whispering gallery. Make a sound near the inside walls of the dome, and it will hug the concave surface, repeating your voice over and over as the sound does laps around the roof.

4. OSLO, NORWAY

Emanuel Vigeland Mausoleum

Artist Emanuel Vigeland (1875-1948) originally built Tomba Emmanuelle in 1926 as a museum for his works. But when he decided the building should also serve as his tomb, he transformed the soaring barrel-vaulted main hall into a dimly lit space covered in frescoes depicting every aspect of life, from conception to death, including some extremely explicit images. The space is wonderfully responsive to sound. Sing a note, and it reverberates around the room and cascades gently from the arched roof.

5. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Symphony Hall

Home to the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Symphony Hall is a mecca for someone like me who is fascinated by aural architecture. Completed in 1900, it was the first auditorium where modern science helped make a great-sounding venue. When I visited, I reveled in how the hall's acoustics enhanced the orchestra's music. As the 20th-century conductor Sir Adrian Boult put it, "The ideal concert hall is obviously that into which you make a not very pleasant sound, and the audience receives something that is quite beautiful."

Ready for some mood music? Scan the QR code on the left on the Spotify app to take you to *National Geographic Traveler*'s custom playlists that accompany this issue's stories on Morocco, Corsica, and California.

ARZHEL HENRY

6. ZADAR, CROATIA

Sea Organ

Built into Zadar's promenade are 35 organ pipes that sound while waves lap against the shore; as you walk along the seafront, the melody and harmonies change. The waves' movement pushes air in and out of the organ pipes to create the notes at random, but overall what is heard is surprisingly pleasing because the pipes have been tuned to harmonies used in local folk music. You can visit other wave organs in San Francisco, California, and Blackpool, England.

7. LURAY, VIRGINIA

Great Stalacpipe Organ

Luray Caverns has the most amazing stalactites and stalagmites. I went there to hear a sonic treasure, an organ that creates music by tapping the cave formations. Tunes take on an ethereal quality as the sound echoes around the large cavern. Created back in the 1950s, it was the brainchild of Leland W. Sprinkle. He spent three years armed with a small hammer and a tuning fork, searching for the right cave formations to make each note.

8. YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND

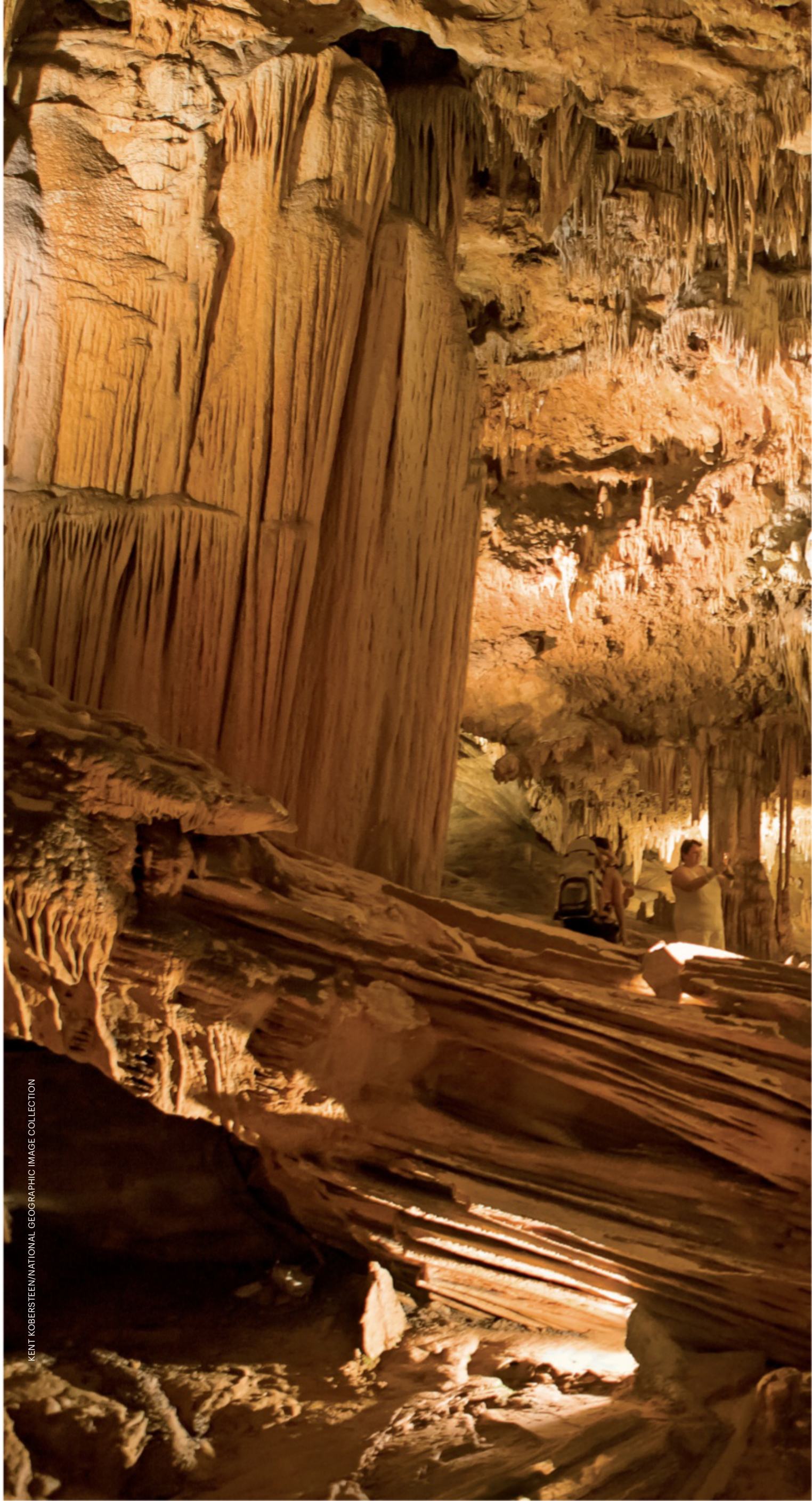
Thurgoland railway tunnel

Tunnels are lots of fun to shout in, as any toddler will readily demonstrate, but here is one whose sound is particularly unusual. This disused railway tunnel now forms part of the U.K.'s National Cycle Network. Constructed in the 1940s, it has an unusual cross-section with bulging walls that form a horseshoe shape. Along with the very smooth and thick concrete walls, this creates an aural treat. Shout in the tunnel and you hear an extraordinary metallic flutter as the sound bounces around and slowly dies away.

9. SOUTHEAST AUSTRALIA

Superb lyrebird

The superb lyrebird is one of the world's most skillful vocal impersonators. It can mimic the calls of about 20 other species it hears in the rainforest, including whip birds and kookaburras. This strange amalgamation of sounds is sung to impress possible mates, with the male performing from a stage it builds on the rainforest floor. Even more remarkably, birds brought up in captivity impersonate man-made sounds, like car alarms, chainsaws, and the click of camera shutters.



KENT KOBERSTEEN/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION

10. ISFAHAN, IRAN

Imam (Shah) Mosque

Constructed in the 17th century, this building is stunning, with dazzling blue Islamic tiles. The huge domed roof is what creates this sonic wonder. Tour guides will stand underneath the dome and flick a piece of paper to create about seven quick-fire echoes: "clack, clack, clack..." Sound bounces back and forth between the floor and ceiling, with the curved dome focusing the echo, forcing it to keep moving up and down in a regimented fashion.

11. ALTYN-EMEL, KAZAKHSTAN

Singing sand dune

Marco Polo ascribed the boom of sand dunes to mischievous spirits creating music with the beat of drums and the clash of arms. When you slide down this dune in Altyn-Emel National Park and create a sand avalanche, you'll feel the surface quaking beneath you as a loud drone fills the air. Only a few dunes have just the right type of sand, as thousands of grains synchronize their movements and sing in a coordinated choir.

12. LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA

Musical road

This peculiar stretch of road creates a rendition of Rossini's *William Tell* overture (used as the theme song for *The Lone Ranger*). The musical notes are created by a set of grooves that vibrate the car wheels like a rumble strip. To get a melody, the Lancaster road has some grooves bunched close together to get high notes, and ones farther apart to get low ones. The fidelity might be poor and the melody out of tune, but I found it impossible not to smile while driving over it.

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

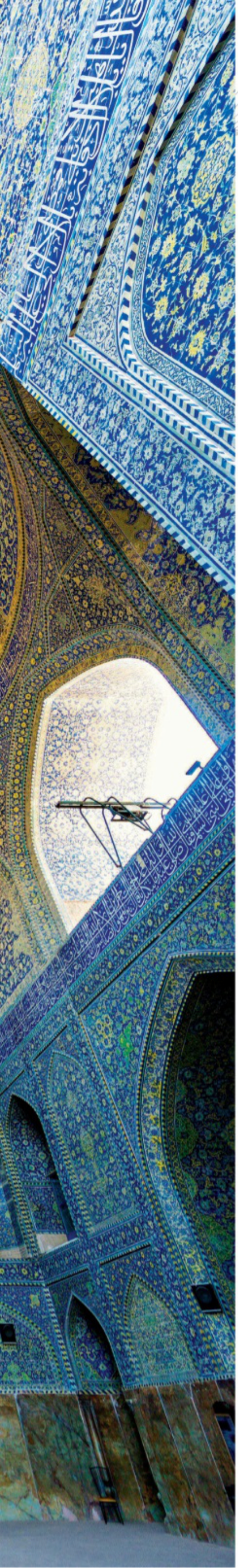
the biggest Internet portal, providing you various content: brand new books, trending movies, fresh magazines, hot games, recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price
Cheap constant access to piping hot media
Protect your downloadings from Big brother
Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages
Brand new content
One site

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open https://avxlive.icu



13. CHICHÉN ITZÁ, MEXICO

Kukulkan Pyramid

The 79-foot Maya step pyramid Kukulkan, aka “El Castillo” (the castle), sits at the center of the archaeological site of Chichén Itzá. If you stand at the bottom of the steps and clap your hands, you get this incredible chirping sound. Whether it was constructed deliberately to make this noise or the sound is an accidental sonic marvel remains a matter of debate. The regular pattern of sound bouncing off the treads of the staircase is responsible for the chirp.

14. SALFORD, ENGLAND

Silent anechoic chamber

In this ultrasilent room, sound does not reflect from the foam-studded walls. But you don’t hear silence. Instead you often get the disconcerting experience of hearing body sounds like your blood pumping. It’s an oppressive place in which some people last only a few minutes. The chamber at the University of Salford is open to the public a couple of days a year. Chambers can also be found in Minnesota and California.

15. SVALBARD, NORWAY

Bearded seals

Listen to the call of a bearded seal, and it’s hard to believe that this is natural. It sounds more like a sound effect from a sci-fi movie. Male bearded seals descend underwater in spirals, singing and releasing bubbles. They create long drawn-out whistling glissandi, with the pitch of the sound gradually dropping. It’s thought that the longer the glissando, the more attractive the male is to females. To hear this sound, you need to use a hydrophone, an underwater microphone.

1. Gong Rocks, Serengeti, Tanzania **2.** Ancient theater, Epidaurus, Greece **3.** Gol Gumbaz, Vijayapura, India **4.** Emanuel Vigeland Mausoleum, Oslo, Norway **5.** Symphony Hall, Boston, MA **6.** Sea Organ, Zadar, Croatia **7.** Great Stalacpipe Organ, Luray, VA **8.** Thurgoland railway tunnel, Yorkshire, England **9.** Superb lyrebird, Australia **10.** Imam Mosque, Isfahan, Iran **11.** Singing sand dune, Altyn-Emel, Kazakhstan **12.** Musical road, Lancaster, CA **13.** Kukulkan Pyramid, Chichén Itzá, Mexico **14.** Silent anechoic chamber, Salford, England **15.** Bearded seals, Svalbard, Norway

TREVOR COX *(@trevor_cox) is a professor of acoustic engineering at the University of Salford, U.K., and author of* The Sound Book.

AGE FOTOSTOCK/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (MOSQUE), RUSSELL MILLNER/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (SEAL); NG MAPS

Sacred. Healing. Loud.
Morocco's music scene draws on ancient roots—and drums up modern dance beats

By **Mickey Rapkin**

MORO

CCO

THIS

story begins like all good ones do, with a 66-year-old man standing on stage, dressed as a goat.

It is late March, and I've come to Morocco, in part, to see a rare public performance by the Master Musicians of Joujouka, a group of traditional Sufi trance artists from a remote corner south of the Rif Mountains who have nevertheless captivated the world. Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones recorded the Masters in their village in the late '60s. William S. Burroughs and Timothy Leary famously dubbed them "the 4,000-year-old rock band." More recently, Billy Corgan of the Smashing Pumpkins spent a week just observing them.

The Masters' brand of ancient trance isn't simply entertaining. It's also said to have healing powers. The half man, half goat who is part of their act is called Bou Jeloud, and according to folklore, if he hits you with a stick during a performance, you *will* get pregnant. More on that soon.

The plan was to spend a week exploring Morocco through its music, which is as varied as its landscapes—from the Atlas Mountains to the red walls of Marrakech to the expansive deserts, where the sound takes on a shape and color all its own. Here, Berber drums beat in surprising rhythms, and music played on ouds, an instrument like an 11-string lute, reflects the country's Arabic roots. Here, Gnawa music emerged from the country's slave-trading past, carried over on slave ships from West Africa that docked in Mogador, now called Essaouira. Taken together, the music provides a soundtrack to the country's rich and complicated history, and a creative tool to shape an itinerary.

It wasn't my idea, exactly. Paul Bowles did it first. In 1957 the author of *The Sheltering Sky* asked the Library of Congress to sponsor a recording expedition across Morocco. He hoped to preserve the country's music before foreign influence muddied the waters. (He was also maybe a colonialist who never wanted

MARC SETHI (FESTIVAL); PREVIOUS PAGES: ALLAL FADILI (BOYS); SERGEY LOBODENKO/GETTY IMAGES (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS)

The Beat Hotel Marrakech is one of the newest of Morocco's live music fests that attract global crowds. Previous pages: A love of music propels these boys from Tinghir Province. The two on the left hold versions of a *guembri*, a lute-like instrument.

DON'T MISS IN MARRAKECH

Presumably there's an Arabic word for "bored," but why learn it? From lavish desert gardens to live music in surprising venues, Marrakech will keep you moving all day—and all night.

Musée de Mouassine

This *riad* inside the medina dating from the 17th century was painstakingly restored, revealing gorgeous plaster, pink gypsum walls, and brightly colored pillars. The painter Abdelhay Mellakh was born in the house. The building was reborn as a museum with some choice Berber artifacts, and it also hosts live music three nights a week. Monday night is oud music, Wednesday is Gnawa, and Friday is Berber. *museedemouassine.com*

Café Clock

An all-female band called B'net Houariyat performs traditional anthems every Saturday night at 6 p.m. These women from the Houara region sit in a corner and perform at full volume to the beat of Berber drums. Note: There's no alcohol here. Entry is five dollars. *cafeclock.com*

Les Nomades de Marrakech

Shops are plentiful in the souk, but Les Nomades de Marrakech is a two-floor mecca inside the medina. Sit down, and the staff will bring you a glass of mint tea, then present you with vintage Berber rugs in every shade, Beni Ourain classics in lush patterns, and contemporary pieces woven on-site. *lesnomadesdemarrakech.com*

La Maison Arabe

This iconic boutique hotel offers a four-hour cooking class led by a *dada* (traditional Moroccan cook), using equipment you likely already have at home. The classes are small (no more than 10 students), and at the end of the class you'll eat what you made—maybe a perfect tagine. Daily live Gnawa music takes place in the lobby from 3 to 6 p.m. *lamaisonarabe.com*

Jardin Majorelle

Yves Saint Laurent purchased these enchanted gardens in the center of the city in 1980. The complex, painted an intense azure named Majorelle blue, inspired the designer, who fell in love with Morocco and incorporated the color into his collections. After his death in 2008, his partner donated the gardens to their nonprofit foundation in Paris. There's now a small Berber museum on-site, with an impressive jewelry room. Pro tip? Hire a guide. The joint is often packed from early morning. But local guides have access to a separate ticket window, and you can basically walk right in. *jardinmajorelle.com*

GO WITH NAT GEO

National Geographic Expeditions offers several Morocco trips, including the 12-day "Legendary Cities and the Sahara," which includes a Sufi musical performance and a stay at Kasbah du Toubkal. *natgeoexpeditions.com/explore;* 888-966-8687

KRISTA ROSSOW (MOSQUE); NG MAPS AND CRAIG MOLYNEUX, CARTDECO

Morocco to evolve.) But his expedition proved fruitful. For four months he and his assistant hauled bulky recording equipment across more than 1,100 miles—capturing folkloric sing-alongs, sword dances, percussion on goatskin drums, and even the final call to prayer delivered in Tangier without speaker wires.

I didn't need reel-to-reel tape. I had an iPhone. As I'd discover over this unlikely week of travels—which included the Master Musicians of Joujouka as the surprising headliners of a hip, new electronic music festival—neither these layered musical traditions nor the young people populating today's scene are stuck in amber. The past very much informs the present, with a new generation of artists emerging in thrilling ways. This revolution will be livestreamed.

From the moment I touch down, it's easy to see why Bowles was captivated by the music. In Marrakech, musicians and snake charmers gather on the famous square, Djemaa el Fna, the sound of horns echoing off the walls of the old city. Scooters rip-roar through increasingly narrow streets, like its own percussion. The Islamic call to prayer—the *adhan*—bellows out five times a day.

Down a twisty side street (as everything must be in the Red City), I sit for a cup of tea with a Gnawa master named Mohammed Sudani, whose official job is to keep the fires of a local hammam burning. He sits on a carpet in what feels like a cave, strumming a *guembri*—a hollowed-out, single piece of wood covered in camel skin and shaped like a canoe—and singing in Tamazight (the language group of the Berber people, the indigenous tribes whose traditions long predate the arrival of the Arab people in Morocco). The string of his fez spins atop his head like a ceiling fan.

Through a translator, he tells me: "The music is spiritual. The music is a doctor." He isn't exaggerating. The healing power of music will be a running theme. My guide explains the Gnawa ceremony of *lila*, which is said to force out the evil spirits, the bad jinn. A pioneering female Gnawa musician named Khadija El Warzazia will later echo this point, telling me how she once cured a Swiss man of his persistent erectile dysfunction (!) during a powerful lila that began with a goat sacrifice. She also tells me she's clairvoyant. What does she see for my future? She smiles: "Only good things."

Eager to take a break from the kinetic energy of Marrakech—and wanting to dig deeper into the country's musical

In Casablanca, the Hassan II Mosque features elaborate artisanship in its hand-carved stone, gilded cedar ceilings, marble floors, and mosaic tilework. It's all a gorgeous feat of human engineering and imagination, with a retractable roof that opens in five minutes.

Four hours' drive southeast of Marrakech, the oasis town of Ouarzazate and its surroundings have become a popular filming location.

TOP MUSIC FESTIVALS

There's been a burst of live music festivals in Morocco. Here are seven to plan a trip around. And for additional insight into the mix of past and present in Moroccan music, check out musician Hatim Belyamani's website, *remix-culture.org*.

MARRAKECH

The Beat Hotel

[MARCH] The new festival was held for the first time in 2019 at the Fellah Hotel, a 20-minute drive from the medina. This initial outing was popular with British party kids excited to binge on sunshine and (comparatively) cheap booze. Asked about her musical inspirations, Yasmean, a DJ from Casablanca who performed at the festival, said that growing up, she had "a bunch of tapes with Gnawa music, but the influence was minimal on me. I was more influenced by the sound of jazz and later built my taste in electronic music. Thank God for the internet." *beat-hotel.com*

RABAT

Festival de Mawazine

[JUNE] Ninety acts play on six stages at Mawazine, which is presided over by the Moroccan king's personal secretary. One of the largest music festivals in the world, it drew 2.5 million people in 2013. How big is it? One of last year's headliners was Bruno Mars. *mawazine.ma*

ESSAOUIRA

Gnaoua & World Music Festival

[JUNE] Launched in 1998, this four-day fest (held in the city's UNESCO World Heritage–inscribed medina) features Gnawa music, brought north by sub-Saharan slaves in the 16th century. It can get hot in June, so you'll be thankful for Essaouira's famous ocean breeze. *festival-gnaoua.net*

FÈS

Fès Festival of World Sacred Music

[JUNE] Ben Harper, Björk, and Patti Smith have all played at this festival, which aims to cross cultural boundaries and create harmony with … harmony. Come for the big names, stay for the Sufi trance. *fesfestival.com*

CASABLANCA

Jazzablanca

[JULY] This annual showcase of jazz (and jazz fusion, funk, blues, rock, soul, pop, and electronic) hosts some 75,000 fans, with a spotlight on local Moroccan acts. *jazzablanca.com*

MARRAKECH

Atlas Electronic

[AUGUST] Atlas Electronic aims to bring a fifty-fifty mix of local acts and international talent to an ecolodge 20 minutes outside Marrakech. When British DJ James Holden, who performed at the festival in 2016, was asked about the alleged healing powers of Gnawa music, he didn't shy away from the magic. "I think that's why I like music anyway," he said. "It doesn't cure headaches. But when I was a kid, if I played nice chords for an hour, it felt pretty good." Imagine how good four days will make you feel. *atlas-electronic.com*

MARRAKECH

Oasis

[SEPTEMBER] The slogan is descriptive: "Dance somewhere different." Oasis has top-tier production and was among the first to bring big international acts to Morocco, taking over Marrakech's Fellah Hotel. This cosmopolitan festival will challenge your assumptions about Moroccan youth culture. *theoasisfest.com*

traditions—I ask Sarah Casewit, co-founder of the experiential travel outfit Naya Traveler, to arrange a music lesson for me at a small Berber village in the High Atlas Mountains.

The drive is stunning. These mountains begin at the Atlantic Ocean and stretch across to the Algerian border. Marrakech's red walls quickly give way to olive tree groves and then snow-capped peaks. An hour into the journey, we stop for tea at an open-air Berber market in a town called Tahannawt. My tour guide, Mohammed—ruggedly handsome despite a very '90s soul patch growing on his chin—came armed with jokes.

"Did you see the Berber 4x4s outside?" he says, pointing to a row of donkeys.

The market (open only on Tuesday mornings) is filled with vendors selling vegetables and juicy strawberries, which are gloriously in season. Charcoal clouds from small grills waft through the tight aisles of the market. Spice vendors lead to clothing stalls and finally to a meat-and-fish market, where you can buy a whole goat—slaughtered and cleaned—but with its hairy face still attached. Proof you're getting what you paid for.

Mohammed haggles over the price of the tea leaves we're about to brew. Why argue over such a small purchase? He laughs, telling me haggling makes mundane tasks exciting: "It makes it tasty." Which is the best explanation I've ever heard and also an invitation for everyone to play the game with confidence. When the tea is properly steeped, Mohammed raises the kettle high in the air and shows me how to pour a cup. One should never announce that tea is ready, he says. Simply start pouring and let the bubbling sound be the siren call. There is music everywhere.

As promised, the village of Anraz (population around 600) is seriously remote. The Soul Patch and I hike through lush green hills dotted with white cherry blossoms, walking past a dozen sheep out for a leisurely stroll. Finally we arrive at a rustic hilltop village of adobe huts and low doorways. At first glance, little appears to have changed in decades. Or so I think. Until the local kids greet me as modern kids do everywhere: by staring down, their faces glued to the glowing screens of their smartphones.

I'd read up on Berber history at the tour operator's behest. Sarah had grown up in Morocco, and she'd told me there was a movement away from the term "Berber," which had been thrust upon the tribes by the Romans, taken from the word "barbarian." The locals preferred to be called Amazigh, or "free people." And their music has been one of the most prominent ways of maintaining their identity. (A must-see museum of Amazigh history is housed in the Jardin Majorelle in Marrakech; elsewhere, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture launched in 2001, aiming to bring the Tamazight language and music to public schools.)

Hassan Hajjaj is a Moroccan artist, photographer, and designer whose My Maroc Stars portrait series showcases Moroccan cultural influencers, including (clockwise from top left) singer Hindi Zahra, Khadija El Warzazia of the all-female Berber ensemble B'net Houariyat, a member of the Arfoud Brothers band, and guembri-playing Simo Lagnawi.

HASSAN HAJJAJ (ALL PORTRAITS); PREVIOUS PAGES: © MASSIMO RIPANI/SIME/ESTOCK PHOTO (CITYSCAPE)

Filled with smoke, sound, and spectacle, Djemaa el Fna has been a trade and social center of Marrakech's medina (Arab quarter) since medieval times.

Chez
SIMO
N° 21

FOOD + DRINK

Morocco is a feast for the eyes, ears, and taste buds. There's street food fit for a king, and rooftop restaurants take you beyond the tagine.

MARRAKECH

Royal Mansour

This stunning hotel property, set on five acres of lush grounds, often houses guests of King Mohammed VI. Even if you can't afford to stay here, it's worth coming by for a drink, and maybe a snack from Michelin-starred chef Yannick Alléno. *royalmansour.com*

MARRAKECH

Shtatto

In Marrakech, it's all about the rooftop view. Shtatto offers a stunning one. Sip a green juice, and post a photo to Instagram. *81 Derb Nkhal, Rahba Lakdima*

MARRAKECH

Chez Lamine Hadj Mustapha

For less than five dollars, you can eat lamb that has been slow-cooked underground for 10 hours. Sprinkle cumin on top, and eat it with your fingers. *18–26 Souk Ablouh*

CASABLANCA

Bazaar Dinner Club

At this Moroccan take on a gastropub, the dining room turns into a late-night dance floor. *57 Avenue Hassan Souktani Gauthier*

MARRAKECH

Le Salama

A stylish, three-story delight with a delicious tagine and a wine list, this is one of very few restaurants with a liquor license. *40 Rue des Banques*

There is more tea awaiting—with mountains of white sugar cubes—as four men dressed in flowing jellabas and four women in head scarves and lace skirts prepare to perform. One of the men is warming the skin of his drum over an open fire; the goatskin can get tight in the cold, and the sound resonates better with a little heat. I ask what the songs are about. The drummer shrugs, then says, "Love and history." What else is there to sing about?

The ritual music—which is usually performed at weddings and at important life events or simply around the house—rings out in a gleeful call-and-response. Sometimes the women hold hands; other times they shimmy and laugh. Seated on the floor, my guide whispers that this particular song is about masculinity—about striving to be an "eagle that crosses the ocean" and not "a falcon that merely crosses a river." We should all be eagles, he says. Which is the opposite of how I feel when the men pull me into the circle, dress me in a jellaba, and hand me a drum. While the rhythm eludes me, the joy does not.

That evening, I check into Kasbah du Toubkal, an Amazigh retreat some 6,000 feet above sea level, on the edge of Toubkal National Park, in the small town of Imlil. There is no road up to the front door. A driver drops me off in town, where a donkey takes my luggage on a 15-minute trek to the hotel's gate.

It is seriously cold that night, and it pours a near-biblical flood. I am startled by a sudden knock at the door. My host has brought me a hot water bottle to warm the bed, which, I can attest, is truly one of life's great lo-fi pleasures. In bed I wonder if I am an eagle flying over rivers or a falcon pretending to be a man—before letting the *tap-tap-tap* of the rain lull me to sleep.

I return to Marrakech just in time to see the Master Musicians of Joujouka perform at the Beat Hotel festival, held on the grounds of a chic 27-acre boutique hotel outside of town. In addition to the Masters, the lineup includes upstart DJs from Casablanca, pop-up restaurants, and a spa tent offering yoga. The transition is jarring. British party kids with sunburned skin and vape pens sit around a pool. The Wi-Fi password is MOONLIGHT. This isn't what Burroughs or the Beat poets imagined. But it is a bold mash-up of genres and experiences come to life.

The Masters—who range in age from late 40s to 86—take the stage after ten o'clock, under a white tent with a top-tier sound system and a serious light rig. The 13 men are dressed in jellabas. They carry drums and reed instruments and sit in a single row of chairs facing the crowd. The music is visceral, the high-pitch whir of the *lira* flutes like a snake worming its way through my earholes and taking hold of my brain stem. Historically, this brand of Sufi trance had been used to entertain the court of the sultan. It was also performed to inspire soldiers prior to battle. Which makes sense. It is that loud from the first drumbeat.

The Masters play nonstop for two hours, with more energy than men half their age. An hour into the show, Bou Jeloud—the half man, half goat—finally appears. The man under all that goatskin is called Mohamed El Hatmi. He's 66 years old, and he's been dressing up as this furry icon for more than 35 years. He measures a hair under five feet tall. But he is superhuman, climbing down into the crowd and running back and forth among the people, shaking his sticks in the air.

We're in the presence of great power, a friend whispers. "People that have mental problems or feel possessed by some affliction come to the village of Joujouka," he says, adding: "Close your eyes." I don't get pregnant. But I am changed.

When Brian Jones recorded the Master Musicians of Joujouka 51 years ago, it basically launched the category we call "world music." But there's a vibrant, creative class on display at the Beat Hotel and elsewhere in Morocco—a new generation of artists challenging cultural norms and carving out their own landscape. Maalem Houssam Guinia, son of the late Gnawa legend Maalem Mahmoud Guinia, performs at the festival with the celebrated British DJ James Holden. The bill also includes two young DJs, Kosh and Driss Bennis. Driss is the founder of electronic label Casa Voyager, named for a train station in their native Casablanca. But their major influence, they tell me, wasn't Berber folkloric music but rather the Detroit electronic and techno scene.

Simmer and sizzle (clockwise from top left): Mint tea refreshes at Le Jardin des Biehn, a boutique hotel in Fès; a caretaker stokes the fires of a hammam in Marrakech's medina; the tagine, a lidded earthenware pot that is a staple of Moroccan kitchens, slow-cooks meats, vegetables, and stews; food stalls pack Marrakech's Djemaa el Fna.

FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI (TEA), KRISTA ROSSOW (HAMMAM, TAGINE, VENDOR); PREVIOUS PAGES: RAINER JAHNS (SQUARE)

Driss admits this has sometimes been a problem for them from a marketing standpoint. The press, he says, always wants there to be some hipster Gnawa backstory to their journey. "The cliché of the local Africans that play ethnic and fusion music," Driss says. "But that's not what we do."

"I didn't have Gnawa music on my iPod growing up," says Kosh. "When I was a teenager, it was Iron Maiden, Metallica." This is part of the reason Driss started Casa Voyager.

"The label is a way of documenting a moment," Driss says. "We are here in Morocco. In Casablanca. In 2019. Making records. We want to break this colonial dynamic." Translation: Thank you, Paul Bowles, but we'll take the mic now.

I feel as if I am witnessing a revolution or perhaps an emancipation from expectation. The very existence of this festival—and others like it in Morocco—is proof that this generation is already seizing the throne. Early in the trip, I was introduced to two hip Moroccan cats, Reda Kadmiri and Karim Mrabti, who are consultants for the Beat Hotel, after Karim founded his own groundbreaking festival, Atlas Electronic, four years earlier.

Reda grew up partially in Montreal; Karim was raised in Rotterdam. It was that outsider mentality that partly inspired Karim to get Atlas Electronic off the ground. Dressed in an orange sweatshirt, black jeans, thin gold chain, and Adidas sneakers, Karim recalled the uphill battle they'd faced. Was it safe? Would people come? But he'd pushed back, saying, "If there can be a wedding of 500 people in Morocco, there can also be a festival." Or a dozen of them.

Reda is standing next to me while the Master Musicians of Joujouka play. He's traveled to Joujouka four times to stay with the Masters. And he greets them with arms wide open. Reda had returned to his native Morocco with a purpose, and the music he championed has a healing power all its own. "Culturally," he says, "Morocco has been through many changes in the 63 years since independence. But today we see a generation of young Moroccans torn between two different appeals: one of conservatism and one of progressive emancipation. And those two currents are very strong. There are times in history where the balance could go [either] way. And it just seems the cause is so close and every hand is important on deck right now."

STAY

Lodging in Morocco ranges from boutique riads behind city walls to hilltop escapes where the view is the only decor you need. What these hotels all have in common is the element of surprise.

MARRAKECH

Riad Farnatchi

Everyone should stay inside the walls of the medina at least once. The streets of Marrakech are a twisty maze, with donkeys sharing narrow passages with motorbikes. But behind the hulking wooden door of Riad Farnatchi—one of the first boutique riads in town—stands a 10-suite hideaway with a tranquil courtyard and an adjoining spa. *riadfarnatchi.com*

IMLIL

Kasbah du Toubkal

This 14-room eco-sanctuary is a National Geographic Unique Lodge, in the High Atlas Mountains. Here you can dine under snowcapped peaks that could be in Bhutan. (So much so that Martin Scorsese shot parts of his Dalai Lama film, *Kundun,* here.) Enjoy soaking in a traditional hammam, or go for a walk with one of the local guides. *natgeolodges.com*

MARRAKECH

Villa des Orangers

A 20th-century riad was revamped and restored to create this 27-room lodging within the medina, the perfect mix of luxury hotel and intimate retreat. The main courtyard is dotted with orange trees, and a heated swimming pool makes for an essential end-of-day refresh. It's just a five-minute walk to the Djemaa el Fna square. Both breakfast and lunch are included. *villadesorangers.com*

FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI

Traditional *zellij* mosaic and marble decorate the central courtyard of Riad Dar Seffarine, a 600-year-old guesthouse in the medina of Fès.

Moroccan rhythms: Scan the QR code at left on the Spotify app for our curated playlist for this story.

Looking around, he says: "There are beautiful examples of the diaspora coming back home—finding their space, their community, and their role."

What happens next? Not even a clairvoyant like Khadija could know that. I ask Frank Rynne, who manages the Master Musicians of Joujouka, about the future of the band. Would their children take over? Frank is optimistic—although he acknowledges the issue has been exacerbated by the arrival of cell phone service in their remote village. "The kids in Joujouka love the music, but they're drawn to the bright lights, big city. You've got kids from Joujouka throwing gang signs on Facebook."

The cultural tectonic plates are shifting in thrilling ways. Still, the single best show I see all week is at Café Clock in Marrakech, where four women perform traditional music at deafening volume while young people dance like nobody is watching. Except someone is watching. Because they're all filming themselves with their iPhones.

Before I leave town, I take a day trip to Essaouira—a port city on the Atlantic Ocean where Jimi Hendrix, Cat Stevens, and Frank Zappa all famously traveled for inspiration. Essaouira is a three-hour drive from Marrakech, and it's home to a four-day Gnawa festival held every summer. My driver plays traditional folkloric music the entire way, telling me the metal of the castanets is meant to recall the sounds of the chains the slaves wore. Months later, I will struggle to get the *clang-clang-clang* out of my head.

The seaside city emerges from the mist like a dream. Or like an oil painting of 18th-century fortifications protecting a sacred port. According to legend, Hendrix wrote "Castles Made of Sand" about Essaouira. It's a good story. But the song was actually released two years *before* Hendrix's first known visit. Still, I could see why the story lingers. The joint is that beautiful. Essaouira is like Marrakech's polar opposite, or a palate cleanser anyway: a beach town where children kick around a sand-covered soccer ball while their parents take in the sun. The place is still inspiring global artists. HBO's *Game of Thrones* came here to film a season-three scene featuring the Mother of Dragons, Daenerys Targaryen.

In the old medina, tight rows of vendors sell meat and spices and carpets. Photos of Hendrix still hang in shop windows. I head to Taros Café, a rooftop escape with glimmering ocean views. I'd heard that musicians sometimes perform out on the deck, although apparently that's only at night. It is lunchtime, and I am starving. So I sit anyway and stare out at the azure ocean, ordering a baked white fish and a glass of cheap white wine. I hear music from the town square below, where tourists clap for local musicians, throwing coins into guitar cases.

I find myself thinking about a conversation I'd had with a DJ who lives in Casablanca called Kali G, who often samples Moroccan folkloric music—Berber voices, Gnawa instruments like the flute that announces the start of Ramadan—into his dance tracks. I'd asked him about Sufi trance and about healing. How does it work? And could I take it home with me? He smiled, then said, "First you have to get rid of your material possessions. Then ego. Only when you say goodbye to fear do you open the door to something beautiful." He was right.

Sitting here on the rooftop, I am listening to a different type of music: the sound of the *alizé,* Essaouira's famous coastal winds. Taros, the name of the restaurant, is actually the Berber word for "coastal wind." The waves lap up on the shore below, rushing in, rushing out. There's no need to rush at all.

Mythic Morocco (clockwise from top left): The Atlas Mountains extend for more than 1,200 miles and form the geologic backbone of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia; a visitor braves midday heat to stroll Marrakech's casbah (old citadel quarter); Fès's medina brims with life; the minaret of Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca is the world's tallest at 689 feet.

MICKEY RAPKIN *(@mickeyrapkin) is a writer in Los Angeles and author of the book* Pitch Perfect. *His first children's book,* It's Not a Bed, It's a Time Machine, *was published this year.*

CARLEY RUDD (MOUNTAINS, CITYSCAPE, MINARET), KRISTA ROSSOW (WALKER); NG MAPS AND CRAIG MOLYNEUX, CARTDECO; PARK DATA FROM THE WORLD DATABASE ON PROTECTED AREAS (WDPA), MAP DATA: © OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS, AVAILABLE UNDER OPEN DATABASE LICENSE; *OPENSTREETMAP.ORG/COPYRIGHT*

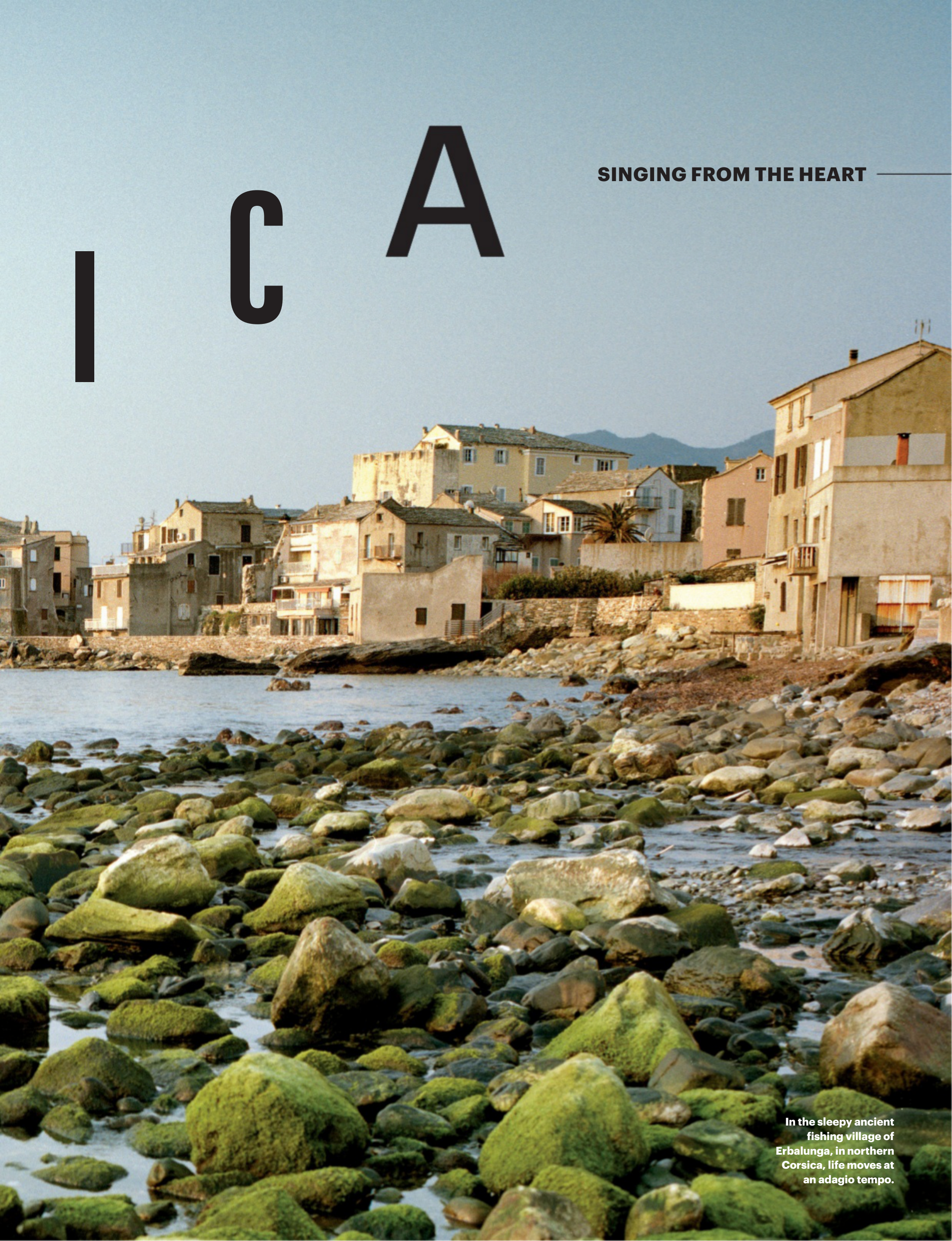
CORSE

A search for perfect harmony lures an American musician to this timeless and untamable Mediterranean island

By **Dessa**

I C A

SINGING FROM THE HEART



In the sleepy ancient fishing village of Erbalunga, in northern Corsica, life moves at an adagio tempo.

A BEAUTIFUL

singing voice is alchemic—you pull a lungful of air through the human machine and it leaves, like magic, as music on the exhale. I'm a singer, so probably biased, but I don't believe we've managed to design an instrument that rivals the reed we've got built in.

A young woman relaxes in countryside (left) blanketed by the maquis, a wild scrubland of superfragrant plants that covers 20 percent of Corsica, from the mountains to coastal towns such as Tiuccia (right).

TEGRA STONE NUESS (GIRL); VINCENT MIGEAT/AGENCE VU/REDUX (WINDOW); PREVIOUS PAGES: JUAN MANUEL CASTRO PRIETO/AGENCE VU/REDUX (COAST); SERGEY LOBODENKO/GTTY IMAGES (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS)

I was first introduced to the vocal group A Filetta by a listener at one of my own concerts, a poorly attended show in Germany. To distract the crowd from its own size, my bandmate Aby and I crammed everyone into a stairwell, then sang Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" in harmony, a cappella.

Afterward I received an email from a man named Christian: *In a very, very quiet moment, please watch this.* A link led to a video in which a man wearing a gold chain and a black dress shirt, open at the collar, held a tuning fork to his right ear before dropping it into his breast pocket. Gray-haired and trim, he moved with a relaxed, animal athleticism.

When his mouth opened, his eyes shut, as if wired on a shared circuit. The sound he emitted matched his physical aspect—it was a boxer's voice, abraded by time or suffering or both. The melody was both mournful and urgent, like a funeral song for someone not quite dead. It featured the tense, fast vocal trills of tragic Portuguese fado or a muezzin's call to prayer.

After the first phrase, half a dozen other male voices joined in; the camera panned across their faces, dark lashes edging their closed eyes. Some sang in close harmony, some sang long vowels, like a bed of strings.

I couldn't understand the words, couldn't even identify the language. But I knew I'd never seen such undisguised passion in the faces of singers making such a religious sound. This was not a church pew prayer. This was a bathroom floor prayer. I played it again and again.

Googling, I learned A Filetta is from Corsica, a Mediterranean island territory of France. The group's charismatic leader is Jean-Claude Acquaviva.

I checked the band website, hoping to find U.S. tour dates. Nothing. I checked again the next summer—no luck. Five years later, I was still checking, and then found that, to celebrate the

At Corsica's southern tip, the Plage de Sutta Rocca is a narrow pebbly beach below the towering limestone cliffs of the town of Bonifacio.

Jean-Claude Acquaviva (left, at center), the leader of singing group A Filetta, has described the vocal music of Corsica as a shared quest for perfect harmony.

Many travelers arrive in Corsica via its main port, Bastia. Victor Hugo lived in the old quarter (opposite) as a child.

band's 40th anniversary, a concert would be performed in the Corsican capital of Ajaccio. I bought a plane ticket.

MAPS CAN'T TELL the truth about Corsica. From above, it looks like any other island: a patch of green against the blue. But Corsica is first and foremost a mountain—sheer cliffs rise from the surface of the Mediterranean as if it's just cut its way out of the sea. The truth of the place is visible only in profile.

I arrive in Ajaccio a few days before the show with plans to meet a Corsican filmmaker named Nico de Susini—the friend of a cousin of a friend who graciously agreed to orient me to the island.

Nico is tall and lean with silver curls, a French accent, and almost always a cigarette—lit or unlit—in his right hand. ("We are like an old place: Everybody smoke here.") Over beers in a little bar, Nico introduces me to the culture: "Respect. It is the first and most important word in our parents' mouths." As in Sicily, Nico says, traditional family values prevail. Toddling Corsicans are instructed to respect mothers, fathers, siblings, neighbors, the elderly. "When we cross the road with old people in the street, we take the bags."

He stresses that Corsicans cannot be understood as islanders or fisherfolk: "We come—all of us—from the mountain." The cigarette gestures inland. They may work on the coasts, but all have ties to a family village in the interior. Historically the mountain also provided a strategic position from which to defend against invasion; the island's geographical position made it a tempting conquest. Although it's been a region of France for more than 200 years, most residents seem to consider it more like an occupied territory—misunderstood and mistreated by federal powers. Corsican pride is untamable; Corsicans' allegiance is to their own flag, their own traditions, their own mountain. You can leash a wolf to a stake in the yard, but it's nobody's pet.

The proprietor sets down a plate of bread and meat. Corsicans are uncompromising about food—cheese and meat in particular. Earlier that day, at restaurant Le Don Quichotte, I'd marveled at ribbons of pancetta shaved so fine I could read the newspaper through them. The medallion of warm chèvre on my toast was so flavorful and so yielding, I wasn't even sure it was cheese. The restaurant's chalkboard menu listed the name of the shepherdess who'd supplied it, and I spent a few minutes admiring online photos of Johanna, goat kid in her arms.

Two men enter the bar and join the conversation, one a Corsican language teacher, the other a professor of philosophy. In fast French, Nico explains the American is a writer and musician, here to see A Filetta. Both seem surprised a traveler from so far would be familiar with Corsican music. I get a round of approving nods.

The Corsican teacher asks if I know what A Filetta means. I do not. The Fern, he says. There is a story, but the details escape him and the conversation proves difficult to translate. I nod, pretending to understand more than I do, and make a note to look it up.

IN THE DAYS before the concert, I do what tourists do. I walk through Plaza Foch, the open-air food market where vendors sell hanging sausages, nuts, and small jars of candied fruit that shine like oiled gemstones. Corsican fare relies on simple combinations of local, fresh ingredients—citrus pulled from trees in the garden; olive oil pressed from local groves; and *brocciu,* a soft white cheese made from the milk of goats or sheep.

But if the Corsican dinner table had a protagonist, it would be the chestnut. It's ground into

ARMAND LUCIANI (SINGERS), CARLOTTA CARDANA (STREET); NG MAPS AND CRAIG MOLYNEUX, CARTDECO; PREVIOUS PAGES: NORBERT EISELE-HEIN/VISUM/REDUX (BEACH)

flour for sweet *canistrelli* biscuits, turned into paste to spread on fresh bread, made into liqueur, baked into a savory polenta-like pudding, and enthusiastically consumed not only by the human residents of the island, but also by *sangliers,* semiwild boars, whose meat is flavored by their predilection for the nut.

I buy two jars of honey. Tapping one of the lids, the vendor says, "Strong." When I sample it, I let out an involuntary "Whoa," surprised by a completely un-honeylike bite. Instead of a round sweetness, this honey came armed with a sharp, astringent note of … Marmite? Makeup remover? Even before I can properly

I'd never seen such undisguised passion in the faces of singers making such a religious sound. This was not a church pew prayer. This was a bathroom floor prayer.

The pink mausoleum of the influential Piccioni family lies sheltered beneath pine trees in the northern mountains.

A set of 19th-century playing cards (below left) depict Napoleon Bonaparte and his extended family. Napoleon was born in Ajaccio, Corsica's capital, where a reenactor (below right) dresses as a member of the Imperial Guard. Opposite: A visitor admires the paintings in the 19th-century Greek Byzantine Catholic Church of St. Spyridon in the town of Cargèse, founded by Greek settlers on the west coast.

decide if I like it or not, I help myself to a generous second serving.

I take a late afternoon bus to Pointe de la Parata to see Îles Sanguinaires, the "bloody islands" of red rock just off the coast. Gravel crunches beneath my work boots on the path up. The view at the top is a postcard in every direction: The clouds are sun roasted, the islands stark against the pastel wash of sea and sky. The pink light doesn't seem

ARCHIVIO GBB/CONTRASTO/REDUX (CARDS); PAOLO VERZONE/AGENCE VU/REDUX (REENACTOR); PREVIOUS PAGES: PAOLO VERZONE/AGENCE VU/REDUX (MAUSOLEUM)

to hit the rock, but feels attached to the air itself somehow, like vaporized rosé.

I visit the little resort town of Porticcio, a 20-minute ferry ride away, to meet a cutler who has agreed to show me his workshop and explain the tradition of Corsican knives. Simon Ceccaldi is sinewy and handsome with a quick laugh that he uses like mortar to fill holes in conversation. Standing in his one-room storefront, he explains that the Corsican knife began as a shepherd's tool; a herdsman would bring a horn from one of his animals to be fashioned into a handle and fitted with a blade. More recently, however, the vendetta knife has captured the imaginations of Corsica's visitors—a dagger purportedly used to settle feuds on the island (though that account might have more marketing appeal than historical veracity).

The knives are displayed like jewelry, propped up in flattering postures. Some blades feature fine stripes of alternating black and silver, in liquid patterns. "Damascus steel," Simon explains, has been heated and folded many times, forming hundreds of tight layers. I watch his hands as he gestures; the right palm is traversed with a thin white line across the meat of his thumb. When I ask about it, he traces a finger down the scar and confirms it's the product of a rare careless moment with one of his own blades.

We enter the workshop behind the store, walking past sanding belts, blade templates, and a machine that cuts steel with a jet of water. Blocks of ebony, oak, boxwood, and walnut sit on shelves, waiting to become handles. We follow the sound of metal clanging to the forge where a man, backlit by fire, is battering a knife into existence.

THE NIGHT OF THE CONCERT I trudge uphill in the dark toward the venue printed on my ticket: L'Aghja. I'm eager to see what sort of Corsican will be in attendance—old people who remember the band as a soundtrack to their youth? Young families? Hipsters?

The big sign for L'Aghja comes into view, and my heart seizes. The windows are dark, the parking lot empty. A poster of A Filetta, elegant in their concert blacks, has been plastered over with a piece of printer paper and French words I don't know. I check the time: 30 minutes until the concert begins. And this sign, I'd wager, announces a change of venue. I've been waiting to see this band for seven years, I've traveled around the world—and the thought of missing it makes me sick with panic. Across the street, I see a man and three women, walking briskly. In manic, awful French, I shout, "HELLO! I'M SORRY! DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH!" The man turns. As I sprint toward him, backpack bouncing, I think, I would never talk to a stranger behaving the way that I am right now.

VINCENT MIGEAT/AGENCE VU/REDUX (CHURCH)

Luckily, the man is more generous with agitated strangers than I am. His name is Matthew Bertrand-Venturini. Within a minute, I'm in the back seat of a little red car, all of us heading to see A Filetta. Had the concert been moved to a larger venue? Was the ticket just misleading? It's unclear, but relief snuffs out my curiosity, as we drive away, as all Corsicans do, very fast.

VINCENT MIGEAT/AGENCE VU/REDUX (CHILD); JEAN-DANIEL SUDRES, VOYAGE GOURMAND/ARS (CLEMENTINE)

The Corsican clementine is mainly grown on the island's east side and is a staple of French markets between November and January. Opposite: A child plays around in the seaside town of Tiuccia.

Travel Wise: Ajaccio, Corsica

WHERE TO STAY

Hotel Napoleon is a clean and modest spot centrally located in Ajaccio. Look for the metal container labeled "Ambra Nera" by the front desk and help yourself to a honey-colored nugget of fragrant amber. *en.hotel-napoleon-ajaccio.fr*

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

Corsicans eat local and fresh. Trust the recommendations of your server, and survey neighboring tables to see what the regulars are ordering. Bakeries are plentiful and tempting. *Beignets au brocciu* are sugared pastries with a bite of soft white cheese at the center; the mild *canistrelli* biscuits are made from chestnut flour, sometimes flavored with white wine or chocolate.

If you like limoncello, look for homemade fare in unlabeled bottles. The local myrtle and maquis plants are also made into sweet liqueurs.

In Ajaccio, take an evening walk down Roi de Rome, a few blocks lined with eateries, bars, and smoking Corsicans. Celebrated restaurant **Le 20123** is named after a village postcode. Next door, at **L'8 Dicembri,** male singers sometimes gather to sing Corsican songs in masterful harmony, accompanying themselves with a guitar and reading lyrics from iPhones. If you're indulging with friends, **Bar a Vin 1755** is the spot for late-night, high-calorie tapas to be shared by the table.

GO WITH NAT GEO

National Geographic Expeditions offers a "Corsica and Sardinia: Sailing the Mediterranean" cruise aboard a four-masted sailing yacht. Stops include Bonifacio and Ajaccio. *natgeoexpeditions.com/explore;* 888-966-8687

Corsican voices: Scan the QR code at left on the Spotify app to access our curated playlist for this story.

We find our seats beside one another in the darkness of the new venue, a black box with a stage elevated a few feet off the floor and folding chairs aligned in tight rows. Haze wafts through the ray of the spotlight. Jean-Claude takes the stage and welcomes the crowd, which eagerly responds.

When the music begins, the basses resonate in such low registers, it seems impossible such sounds could issue from the body of a man built to normal scale. Jean-Claude delivers the melody in his fighter's timbre, flanked by tenors who sing harmonies so clear and sweet they almost hurt to hear. Just as in the video, the singers cup a hand around one ear to better discern their own voices in the tidal swell; they stagger their breathing so that long notes hold unbroken. I find it hard to imagine someone writing these songs, in the same way it is difficult to imagine someone inventing the bowl or the door—they seem so elemental, more a feature of the natural world than the designed.

Between songs, Jean-Claude talks about freedom and recent political events. When the group formed in the late '70s, it was born out of a movement for social and political resistance; Matthew leans over to translate when he can. But even without the exposition, the melodies are decipherable: There is love and loss and inextinguishable longing. Matthew and I agree that the best are the a cappella songs. When I hear Matthew sniffling beside me, I don't bother drying my own cheeks. I let the song dissolve the ceiling and turn the square black room into a vaulted cathedral. Jean-Claude and his men take hold of one another's forearms to raise their voices together, lifting and darting like birds, then diving in a sudden decrescendo that ends the song by guillotine.

I LEAVE CORSICA the way that everyone does—be it visitor, resident, or rebuffed invader. With plans to return.

When I look it up back at home, I learn A Filetta is named for a Corsican fern. The root structures grow horizontally, making the plant exceedingly difficult to pull or displace. No matter what army might roll in or whose flag they unfurl, the fern is resolute. It will not be moved.

I realize how fitting it is that the songs of Corsica—anthems of a robust, defiant cultural identity—should be performed by the human voice. It is the only instrument inseparable from its player, rooted firmly in the body from which it cannot be removed without a fight.

DESSA *(@dessa) is a rapper, singer, and the author of* My Own Devices: True Stories From the Road on Music, Science, and Senseless Love. *Music and tour dates at* dessawander.com.

Surf crashing on granite headlands provides the western Corsica coastline with its own native music.

CHRISTINA ANZENBERGER-FINK/ANZENBERGER/REDUX (FISHERMAN); NG MAPS AND CRAIG MOLYNEUX, CARTDECO; MAP DATA: © OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS, AVAILABLE UNDER OPEN DATABASE LICENSE: *OPENSTREETMAP.ORG/COPYRIGHT*

What does silence sound like? We go in search of nature's hush on a Southern California road trip

By **George W. Stone**
Photographs by **Jennifer Emerling**

CALIF

ORNIA

A QUEST FOR QUIET

KIKI, DO YOU LOVE ME?

Are you riding?
Say you'll never ever
leave from beside me…

I'm sitting at an amoeba-shaped resort pool in Palm Springs, and a DJ is blasting Drake to a puddle of swimmers doing more soaking than splashing. I measure 84 decibels—the volume of a very loud and extremely close Vitamix blending a batch of piña coladas. My thoughts are screaming for attention they will not get because I'm buffeted by beats, deafened by the din, drowning in a sea of sound in this hip-hop hot tub. I'm longing for an island of silence. I know I'm not alone.

Sound—waves of vibrating airborne molecules that smash into one another before crashing into our eardrums—has always been a part of our world. But environmental noise is the haze of our days, a human-made fog that pollutes the space around us. Conversations carry on at 60 decibels (dB), vacuum cleaners whir at 70, alarm clocks wail at 80, stadiums can rock as loud as 130.

This is not to suggest that our planet is silent: The calls of some species of cicada can surpass 110 dB. Thunder claps at 120. The loudest clicks from sperm whales have been measured at 230—louder than a rocket launch but emanating underwater. Earth itself has a sound, an incessant hum caused by pounding ocean waves, measured at a frequency 10,000 times lower than what humans can hear.

Sometimes I worry that I've forgotten how to listen—how to separate layers of sound and explore the audible dimensions around me. How much of my life am I missing when I'm not listening?

So I set out on a 500-mile sound quest that took me from the drumbeat of civilization to nearly noiseless realms. I did not turn on the radio, though occasionally I sang a song that came to mind. I barely spoke; instead I tried to hear whatever came my way. As a traveler, I know that there is beauty in stillness and harmony in silence. My path started with a plane (120 dB) smacking down on a runway in Southern California. Which is where my journey begins…

Palm Springs pops with bubblegum pink and other sunny colors at places such as (clockwise from top) the mid-century modern "lion house" and the deck at the Saguaro Hotel. When not working at Saguaro, Jorge Castellon is a dancer with a serious fan collection. Opening pages: Tiki enthusiasts gather annually at Caliente Tropics Resort.

SERGEY LOBODENKO/GETTY IMAGES (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS)

ELVIS HONEYMOON HIDEAWAY, PALM SPRINGS, 42 DECIBELS

Suspicious minds are wondering what I'm up to, holding a microphone to the house where Elvis and his bride, Priscilla, retreated following their 1967 nuptials. A self-guided drive to celebrity homes has led me to the King's banana-colored, boomerang-hooded manor, currently on the market for $3.2 million. Fans can book a guided tour to check out the futuristic contours of this four-bedroom "house of tomorrow," situated at the base of the San Jacinto Mountains. I've come for a little less conversation. I'm here on a mission to listen.

I've assembled a tool kit for measurements that includes a decibel meter, a digital recorder, an ambient temperature gauge, and a heart rate monitor. At 11:45 a.m. it's 84°F. Birds trill as a springtime breeze washes over branches. Beyond a sense of calm, there's not much to detect.

Palm Springs is a playground of shape and color, a mid-century marvel of manicured lawns, modernist homes (glass, stone, terrazzo, and Formica), and poolside saturnalia set within an arid ecosystem that can seem like the surface of Mars. The combination of desert minimalism and architectural daring ushered in an era of swizzle sticks and domestic idealism.

With design in mind, I putter around town, ogling the estates of stars from another era: Marilyn Monroe, Liberace, Frank Sinatra. In terms of architectural impact, few properties come close to the Kaufmann Desert House, designed by Richard Neutra in 1946 for the Pittsburgh retail magnate who had previously tapped Frank Lloyd Wright to build Fallingwater in Pennsylvania. I wind up at the former estate of singer and talk show host Dinah Shore. At 12:26 p.m. and 88°F, it is only slightly louder than Elvis's house—47 dB, about as loud as a babbling brook. A crow caws and flies buzz as gardeners tend to the grass, perhaps in anticipation of the return of current owner Leonardo DiCaprio.

In recent years the city has attracted a cool crowd, drawn to the Coachella Valley for lost weekends at formerly faded motels that have been reinvented to Rat Pack splendor: the Ace, the Saguaro, the Parker (opened as California's first Holiday Inn in 1959, later owned by Gene Autry and Merv Griffin, now a Jonathan Adler–designed emblem of modernism's resilience). The valley is quiet, but the city is getting louder.

Nature sets the soundtrack along the Andreas Canyon Trail in Indian Canyons, Palm Springs. Birds chirp, water trickles, and wind rustles palm fronds in this quiet oasis.

So I head 20 minutes south to Indian Canyons, the ancestral home of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. I park and hike into Palm Canyon, a shaded oasis with a creek that weaves around boulders and rushes over stones. Kneeling beside the water, I measure 65 dB (a working air conditioner). The sun is bright, and the air is dry, despite the 86°F heat. As I step away from the creek, I hear my footsteps on gravel and the occasional flitting of a grasshopper. Painted lady caterpillars cross my path as I disappear into a soundscape that feels like velvet.

VARNER HARBOR, SALTON SEA, 58 DECIBELS

"A date palm must have its feet in the water and its head in the fires of heaven," states an Arabic proverb quoted by E. Floyd Shields, founder of Shields Date Garden, in his 1952 manifesto *The Romance and Sex Life of the Date.* Date shakes are to this stretch of desert what egg creams are to Brooklyn or key lime pie is to the Florida Keys—indulgent necessities open to infinite interpretation. Only a coldhearted road tripper heading southeast toward Indio on I-10 would pass Shields's roadside curiosity without tasting the granddaddy of all date shakes. The site is significant in California agricultural history and a relic from an era when roadside attractions were famous for being famous and worthy of seeing just to say you saw them.

In the garden's café, blenders whir quietly behind a screen (no more than 55 dB) as they whip up vanilla ice cream and crystallized dried date flakes into a concoction that is way too sweet but superdelicious. I sip my shake as I step into a wood-paneled movie theater that has been screening, for decades running, the founder's "treatise on date culture."

I need the sugar for the 45-minute drive past Coachella, Thermal, Mecca, Mortmar, and finally to California's largest

Earth itself has a sound, an incessant hum caused by pounding ocean waves, measured at a frequency 10,000 times lower than what humans can hear.

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lake, the Salton Sea, a saline lake in the Sonoran Desert that formed in 1905 when the Colorado River breached its silt-clogged levees and, over nearly two years, flooded a basin along the San Andreas Fault. It wasn't the first time the valley had been flooded—it had done so in preceding centuries—but this time part of the lake was transformed into a tourist attraction.

"Out of disaster come desert beaches with their excellent bathing, boating and motorboat racing," wrote Shields, around the time that waterside resorts began to bubble up. But the 1950s recreational dream was illusory; by the 1970s, rising water levels, increasing salinity (the lake has no drainage outlet), and agricultural runoff began to spell doom for the holiday destination. Although this body of water remains a stop on the Pacific flyway for migratory birds, it's now most often described in apocalyptic terms—as a dying ecosystem that coughs up algal blooms, dead fish, and rank odors.

There are two songs of the Salton Sea: The first is a 58-decibel natural rhythm of birds tweeting, water gently lapping, wind racing over the glassy surface. The second song, increasing in volume, is a lament of environmental degradation, a requiem for a smothered shoreline. While some conservationists are motivated by the first song to restore this ecosystem, most visitors, myself included, are carried away by the mournful melody.

"We're doing the desert—for real," says Phoenix Demille (top), with her dog, Mazie, outside the Giant Rock Meeting Room, a café in Yucca Valley. Arid attractions near the Salton Sea include folk art masterwork Salvation Mountain and the café at Shields Date Garden, home to a creamy date shake.

This is the sound of intention: of people making an effort to connect with each other and listen to the world. It's music to my ears.

THE INTEGRATRON, LANDERS, 39 DECIBELS

On the road north to my next stop I pass under colossal wind turbines that slice the sky like vorpal swords and see power cables stretched across the horizon like the strings of an immense violin. I'm recalling "Jabberwocky," Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem, which relies on invented words that sound exactly like what they mean, even though they are meaningless. *'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe …*

It's fun to remember things you think you've forgotten, and a road trip is perfect for this. I'm heading from the Sonoran toward the Mojave Desert, pondering dreamscapes of monsters like the Jubjub bird and the frumious Bandersnatch—fantastical creatures that will live forever in my memory because their author put their sonorous names to verse and rhyme.

Sound is food for the ears and nourishment for the soul. While voice is our first instrument, the world's earliest musical instruments—43,000-year-old flutes made from bird bone and mammoth ivory, found in a cave in southern Germany—suggest that music played a part in early *Homo sapiens* society.

The communal benefits of music have been valued for centuries, from Egyptian incantations to Greek flutes and lyres to Chinese bells and wind chimes, Indigenous Australian didgeridoos, African drums, and Native American rattles.

In recent years, sound baths have made waves in meditation and therapeutic circles as antidotes to stress, depression, anomie, and more. Under the guidance of an instructor and to the frequencies of quartz crystal singing bowls keyed harmonically to the body, sound bathers enter a meditative state of deep relaxation and resonant awareness. I have benefited from such auditory immersion, and I believe in its healing power.

After an hour of driving, I reach my destination: the Integratron, a squat white dome dating from the mid-1950s, protected behind fencing and offering a ritualized sound-bath experience. The place looks like a UFO, which is not surprising considering its creator, George Van Tassel, claimed that it was based on "the design of Moses' Tabernacle, the writings of Nikola Tesla and telepathic directions from extraterrestrials."

The wooden structure, listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service, sits at an energy vortex—an intersection of geomagnetic forces—and "was designed to be an electrostatic generator for the purpose of rejuvenation and time travel." Unfortunately, when I arrive, the Integratron is closed, and so my space-time journeys will have to wait. If only I could go back in time to plan better… Still, I feel a surge of joy as I wander around the "energy machine" and

Founded in 1957, the Integratron offers sound baths: meditative acoustic immersions said to have healing and therapeutic benefits.

through the scraggly desert vegetation punctuated with spiky leaves of grass, meditating on this remarkable effort to channel planetary power into waves of peace and spiritual healing. This is the sound of intention: of people making an effort to connect with each other and listen to the world. It's music to my ears.

KELSO DUNES, MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE, 54 DECIBELS

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for: the sound of the planet speaking to me. For this I head toward the largest field of aeolian sand deposits in the Mojave Desert. My route from Landers to Kelso Dunes takes me past Joshua Tree National Park, home of the spiky-topped yucca palms that inspired the title of U2's 1987 landmark album about America. The park is popular (some say too popular) and seductive; it's difficult to drive past its gates without stopping. Since my goal is to listen to the sounds of nature, not the clicking of cameras, I press on and careen into the desert.

If you're even mildly concerned about chupacabras, the goat blood–sucking creatures from folklore's dark recesses, this is not the drive for you. Crows dive-bomb my car as I cruise across a scorched valley framed by ominous rock mountains and lined with salt flats. It feels like a road to perdition, the kind of drive an outlaw makes. At Amboy I turn right on Route 66, the National Trails Highway, and watch as the longest, loneliest train in my life, a silver stream drawn by three engines, crosses my path. Then I pass Roy's Motel and Café, an artifact of atomic age Googie architecture but now a snapshot stop in a ghost town.

Hours pass, my brain's jukebox is totally played out, and I'm enjoying the silence. At last I turn down a potholed road and stop near the base of a sand colossus that looms like a sleeping camel. I learned about Kelso Dune Field by reading *The Sound Book,* a tour of the world's sonic wonders by Trevor Cox, a professor of acoustic engineering (and author of "Soundscapes" on page 46 in this issue). There are only about 30 aeolian dunes in the world—mountains that "boom" when sheets of consistently sized grains of sand cascade down a steep surface and rub against stationary sand below. I experienced my first singing dune by sliding down a slip face on Namibia's Skeleton Coast. As the sand grains danced on air pockets, they vibrated all around me, generating the reverberant buzz of a bee swarm.

A sand avalanche starts the singing at Kelso Dunes, the largest field of aeolian sand deposits in the Mojave Desert. If conditions are right, visitors can hear the dunes burp and boom.

Breaking waves serenade a couple at sunset on the three-mile-long coast of Crystal Cove State Park, in Orange County.

I grab my recording equipment and dash to the dunes, which turns out to be a deceptively long distance (the field covers 45 square miles, though I am in a small portion of that space). The flat path lined with desert grass and wildflowers eventually gives way to a mottled beach, then hilly humps, and finally a 650-foot mountain of shifting sand that is soft, deep, and difficult to climb. The sand is starting to speak to me; its first message is: "Why did you leave your water bottle in the car?"

Cox describes this sound of striding across an aeolian dune as a tuba being played badly: *burp, burp, burp.* But as I reach the ridge, I hear little more than my own panting. I roll around the dune, scooting down the leeward side, racing up to a new ridge, feeling the wind-sculpted ripples of sand under my bare feet, and yet I do not hear an oscillating hum or the drone of an airplane propeller. I certainly do not detect "the sounds of all kinds of musical instruments, and also of drums and the clash of arms," as Marco Polo wrote about the Gobi desert's booming sands.

Many factors determine whether a dune will sing: the degree of incline, shape of sand, humidity, wind direction. I had hoped for a symphony, and all I got was silence. Disappointed, I busy myself by taking dubious measurements: 54 dB (the hum of a refrigerator) at 78°F with a wind speed of five miles an hour. Perhaps the fact that I really don't know what I'm doing is why I can't hear the dunes? Just as I'm ganging up on myself, I feel a breeze whoosh across the sand and I imagine tiny grains of silica dancing. Something starts to resonate. I inhale deeply and feel calm, quieted, happy to be in the middle of nowhere, alone and untethered yet connected to the universe. The sun starts to set, and shadows stretch over the landscape so that the larger dunes appear to smother the smaller dunes until nothing is left but silhouettes. What I find I could never have looked for.

SOUND LAB, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE, 20 DECIBELS

My search for silence has led me deeper into a world of sound, but I can't shake my need for noiselessness. I've read about efforts to uncover the quietest places on Earth, including acoustic ecologist Gordon Hempton's One Square Inch project, which identified a spot in the Hoh Rainforest, in Washington State's Olympic Peninsula, as the most noise pollution–free point in the contiguous United States. I have been to this forest; it was hushed and enveloping (though I kept expecting Ewoks to come crashing through the moss-covered trees).

California dreamin': Scan the QR code at left on the Spotify app for our curated playlist for this story.

I wanted more of less, so I set my GPS for the University of California, Irvine, where there is a room so silent—an anechoic chamber lined with sound-absorbing insulation to smother acoustic waves—it can reportedly drive a person crazy. At the Department of Cognitive Sciences' Conscious Systems Lab, I meet a pair of Ph.D.'s, Kourosh Saberi and Haleh Farahbod, who study how perceptual systems such as hearing, speech, and language emerge from brain function. Crucial to my curiosity, they have an anechoic chamber located in their basement.

Entering the chamber is like stepping into a secret. The world's hum is absorbed by dense foam walls, but anxiety seems amplified in this dark, echo-free box. The room is designed for serious research into brain mapping, hearing aid technology, and the development of auditory navigational systems for blind people. My own interests are embarrassingly pedestrian: I just want to experience silence. And so we close the door, stand perfectly still, hold our breath, and stare at each other for one minute.

My heartbeat sounds like a bass note in a Temptations song. I measure something shy of 20 dB. Louder than the -9.4 dB documented in the world's quietest chamber but low enough to reduce us to laughter when someone's stomach gurgles. Anywhere there's a human, there will be a human sound. I decide to embrace this reality—and all the noises that come with life.

CRYSTAL COVE STATE PARK, ORANGE COUNTY, 70 DECIBELS

My journey began in the desert and ends at the sea, to the music of waves crashing on barnacle-covered boulders, children outrunning the tide, seagulls calling, and my bare feet slapping the sand. It turns out that experiencing soundlessness in the anechoic chamber feels like an acoustic burial or a funeral in outer space, so I decide to drive a few miles along the Pacific Coast Highway to Newport Beach to return to life and explore the aural curiosities of this marine conservation area.

Sound is transcendent, and solitude does not require silence. In fact, it's the integration of sound into our lives that brings volumes of meaning. Henry David Thoreau called sound "a vibration of the universal lyre." On the beach I find my own spirit vibrating at a higher frequency. Birdsong, wind, waves, conversation, music, airplanes. Every element is an instrument.

I thought my sonic quest was about silence, but it's not. It's about remembering how to hear harmonious notes in the world. Even an echo is a new sound on the road to bliss.

GEORGE W. STONE *(@georgewstone) is editor in chief of* Traveler. *California-based photographer Jennifer Emerling (@jemerling) has an eye for electric color and a heart for the open road.*

Travel Wise: California Sounds

A SOUND CONNECTION

Nat Geo and the Decibel
The decibel, a unit of measurement used to compare sound intensity on a logarithmic scale, is named for Alexander Graham Bell, one of the founders of the National Geographic Society. A difference of one decibel (one-tenth of a "bel") can be detected by some listeners. Zero dB is the hearing threshold; a whisper measures roughly 30 dB.

SIGHTS AND BITES

Nature's Health Food
This vegetarian/vegan café in Palm Springs is perfect for healthy restorative flavors and a delicious, almost-guilt-free date shake. *natureshealthfoodcafe.com*

The Integratron
Unlock your chakras and lift your spirits in a 60-minute sonic healing session at this historic acoustic chamber in Landers. Check the site for schedules and to reserve a space. *integratron.com*

Modernism Week
This annual celebration of mid-century architecture and culture is a bold and beautiful time to see Palm Springs (February 13-23, 2020). Book ahead. *modernismweek.com*

Palm Springs Art Museum
Discover the creative origins of Coachella Valley's artful turns and the marvels of modernist design at the three locations of this community institution. *psmuseum.org*

WHERE TO STAY

Crystal Cove State Park
A conservancy supports the historical and natural assets of the protected parkland and manages 24 cottages that were part of a beach colony in the 1920s. The Moro campground, on the bluff overlooking the ocean, offers sites with spectacular views. *crystalcovestatepark.org, crystalcove.org*

The Ranch at Laguna Beach
Nestled amid coastal canyons, this National Geographic Unique Lodge pays homage to its history as a 19th-century homestead. Guests can swim, kayak, and paddleboard along Laguna's seven miles of sand. *natgeolodges.com/explore*

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Imperfectly Perfect Istanbul

There's no better place than a Bosporus ferry to write a love letter to an unforgettable city

By
Onur Uygun

Illustration by
Fabio Consoli

A few months ago, I came across an online study that compared the places a city's visitors photographed to places its residents photographed. In some cities, like London and New York, visitors and residents took pictures in notably different places. In Venice and Rome, tourists took many more pictures than locals. In some cities—I won't name them, so as not to hurt anyone's feelings—travelers couldn't find much to photograph at all.

And then there was Istanbul. The study seemed to indicate that Istanbul's longtime residents took at least as many pictures as its first-time visitors, in the same spots—especially on the water, on the routes of the ferries that constantly shuttle between the two continents that the city straddles.

Yes, there's a lot to love about Istanbul. As the capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires (and even of the Roman Empire just before its collapse), it has a rich history to offer. As a commercial and political center—and the largest city on Earth for a very long time—it attracted many ethnic groups, all of whom left their marks. At its height, it was even called "the city of the world's desire", and for good reason.

The desire is still here—for both visitors and locals. One day, I board one of the city's beloved ferries on the European side. I stand on the open deck at the stern. As we depart, the city's modern silhouette emerges beyond the waters of the Bosporus.

The air smells of spring and sea. As the sun disappears behind Süleymaniye Mosque, considered by many to be the finest in Istanbul, the sky to the west glows orange, then purple. I think this is going to be the sort of evening when the sunset has a different kind of beauty to it.

One of the most famous poems about the city has this memorable line: "I listen to Istanbul, my eyes closed." But this ferry ride is turning out to be the exact opposite. I see every element that should make a sound: minarets, the Spice Bazaar, long lines of cars on bridges, crowded seafronts, seagulls—but none of their sounds reach me. Even seemingly silent are the seagulls, which follow the ferry in the hope that someone will toss them a piece of freshly baked *simit* (a sesame-seed bagel). I only hear the sound of waves when the boats cut through the blue waters of the Bosporus and an occasional horn from a cargo ship. I am left alone with the magnificent view.

Or not so alone. I look at the people on the ferry. Some are enjoying the view with headphones on. Some, probably regular commuters, are more used to the view and are reading their books. One or two couples chat, snuggled together against the gentle breeze. Someone is on FaceTime, sharing the view live. And there are a number of people leaning against the rails and taking pictures.

These are the photographs compiled by the analysis I'd read. We know who takes them: I do, you do, a student living on one continent and going to school on the other does. A busy civil servant, an influencer who'll get 15,000 likes on Instagram, an Uncle Ali who'll send them to his family's WhatsApp group—all take photos.

It is nearly impossible not to, no matter how many times we see that view. Especially if it is spring and the sun is setting. From the ferry, from a terrace, from the Galata Bridge, or from the window of their own homes, thousands of strangers looking at the same sight share a connection. All of them are reminded that they are looking at a special city.

Beautiful, sure. But Istanbul is not without its problems: infamous traffic jams, lack of urban planning, inequality, just to name a few. But this is a topic for other articles or, possibly, hefty books.

Despite everything, Istanbul manages to pull wonders out of its hat. Not only with the kind of beauty that overwhelms you in a single glance but also with stories that could only have happened here, that are happening right now, or that will happen in the future. Istanbul rises above mortal cities formed of buildings, roads, and parks. Istanbul is a city of exceptions, everyone knows that. Cities don't sit on two continents; Istanbul does. Mosques don't have mosaics of Jesus; in Istanbul they do. There is no such thing as seeing dolphins during your morning commute to work; in Istanbul there is. It doesn't snow much on palm trees; in Istanbul it does. In Turkish, the letter "n" is never followed by "b"; in Istanbul it is.

That is why for centuries people have been writing poems and songs about this city. That is why they have cast it in the best roles in films and novels. But Istanbul plays an utterly different role in each of these works of art: a melancholy city of lonely people in an old nostalgic movie, a giant and violent back alley in a noir thriller, a realm of wonders in a dreamy novel, and an uncaring beauty in many, many songs.

These roles may seem contradictory at first glance, but they ultimately portray how Istanbul is actually many cities sharing a single identity. The moment the last punctuation mark is placed in the last sentence in any of these works, the city it portrays begins its journey toward the past, and a brand-new city starts to take shape. But old Istanbuls continue to live on in the details.

Throughout history, whoever ruled Istanbul was able to shape it only to a degree; in the end, Istanbul does what it pleases.

Istanbul's unique beauty comes from its inability to stay the same and its irrepressibility as well. Throughout history, whoever ruled Istanbul was able to shape it only to a degree; in the end, Istanbul does what it pleases.

As my ferry passes cargo ships and the Historic Peninsula's historic minarets, I sense all those old Istanbuls. I don't see them from my boat; I don't hear them. But I feel them. And I can't help but think: If Istanbul were the kind of city where the four minarets of Hagia Sophia were identical, as is almost always the case with mosques, perhaps it would not be loved as much.

Istanbul will continue to change, and we'll continue to look at its old photographs with envy. But the day will come when the Istanbuls we have not yet built will take their place in somebody's memories. Maybe in the future, commuter ferries will only be running for nostalgia's sake. Maybe one day, there will be a drone congestion in the old bazaar instead of a human one.

Regardless, when that day comes, someone will turn to a sun setting over the town to snap a picture of it or will use the appropriate emotion-recording technology of the day. And we will keep loving it, not in the usual way of loving a city but like loving a character, a real person made of flesh and bone—and a soul.

ONUR UYGUN *(@onuruygun) is the managing editor of* National Geographic Traveler Turkey, *in which this story originally appeared. Based in Istanbul, he loves coming home as much as he loves traveling.*

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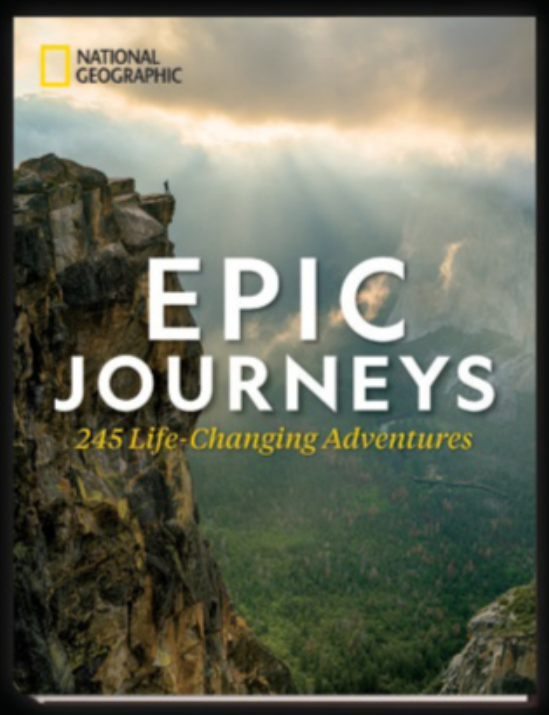

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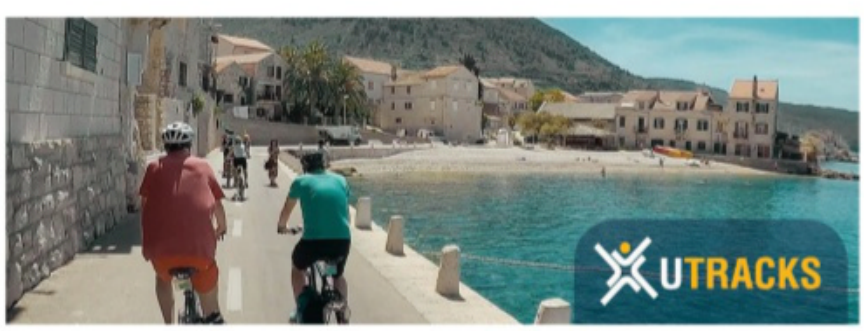

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WORLD WISE
TRAVEL QUIZ

NASA/GSFC/LARC/JPL, MISR TEAM

1 Name the haven for more than 6,000 species of flora and fauna (pictured) that's also the largest living structure on Earth and visible from space?

2 According to legend, blues musician Robert Johnson sold his soul at the crossroads for his talent. Where is this fabled crossroads believed to be?

3 Portugal's Church of St. Francis in Évora has a chapel decorated with what unusual material?

4 Which archaeological site has two temples celebrating Ramses II and Nefertari that were moved due to flooding from the Aswan High Dam?

5 Which island is home to El Yunque—the only tropical rain forest in the U.S. national forest system?

6 Melodic tunes called ragas can be heard emanating from old palaces along the Ganges in what Indian holy city also known as Kashi, a Hindu name meaning "city of light"?

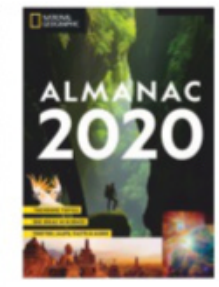
7 Which country has more volcanoes than any other?

8 In what nation do 50,000 glow-in-the-dark stones light up a bike path in a tribute to *Starry Night*?

9 If you were "gonna rock down to Electric Avenue," where in London should you go?

10 Before it became the Leaning Tower of Pisa, what was the original purpose of the structure?

11 Jimi Hendrix, Cat Stevens, and Frank Zappa traveled to what Moroccan port city for inspiration? (Hint: Read our Morocco feature on page 56.)



Find facts, travel trends, infographics, a calendar of events, and more in National Geographic's *Almanac 2020*. Available August 27 at *shopng.com/books*.

1. THE GREAT BARRIER REEF, AUSTRALIA 2. ROSEDALE, MISSISSIPPI 3. HUMAN BONES 4. ABU SIMBEL, EGYPT 5. PUERTO RICO 6. VARANASI 7. INDONESIA, WITH 167 OF THE WORLD'S 850 KNOWN ACTIVE VOLCANOES 8. THE NETHERLANDS 9. BRIXTON 10. A BELL TOWER 11. ESSAOUIRA

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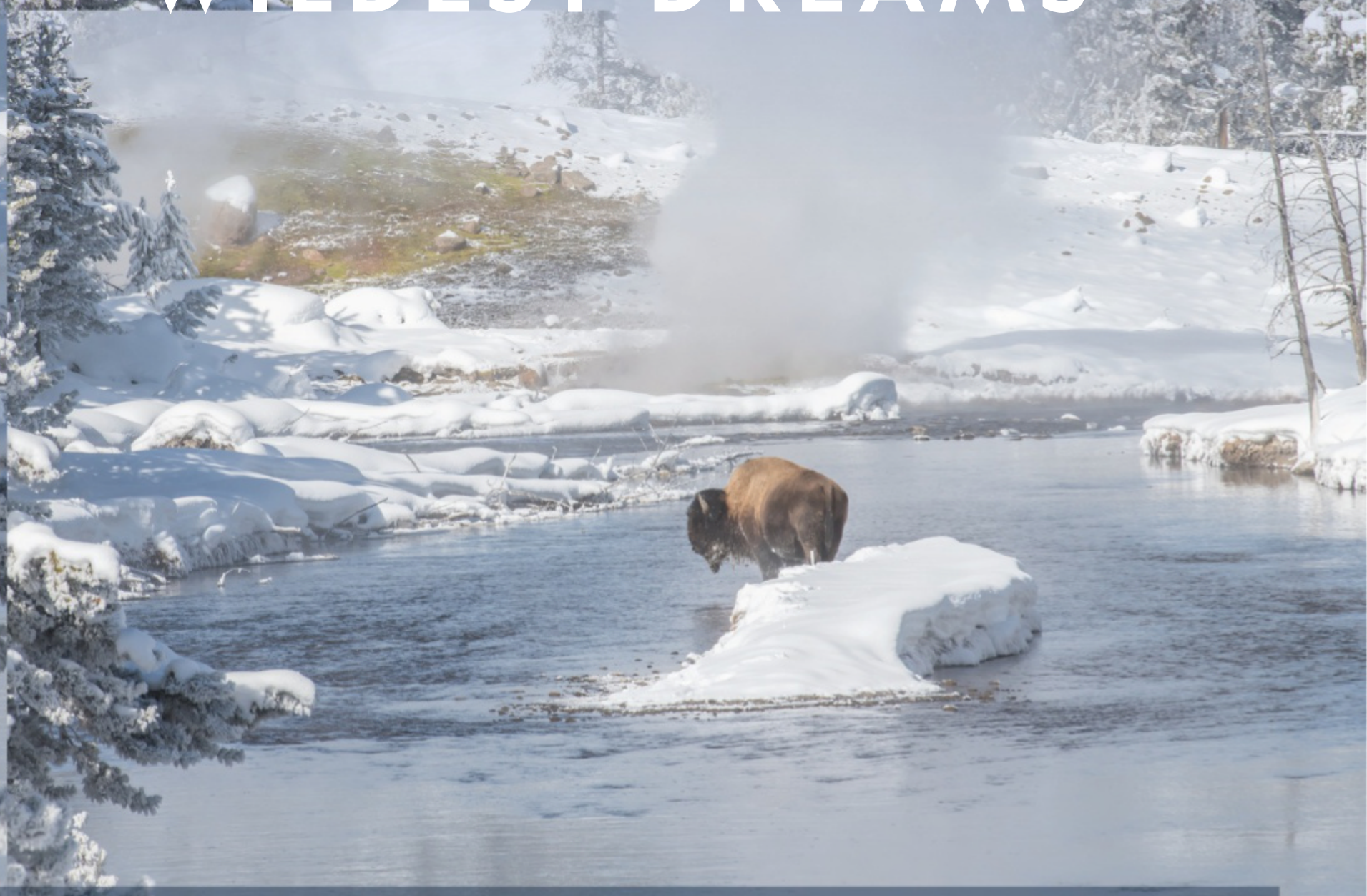
TRAVEL BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS



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